

# REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

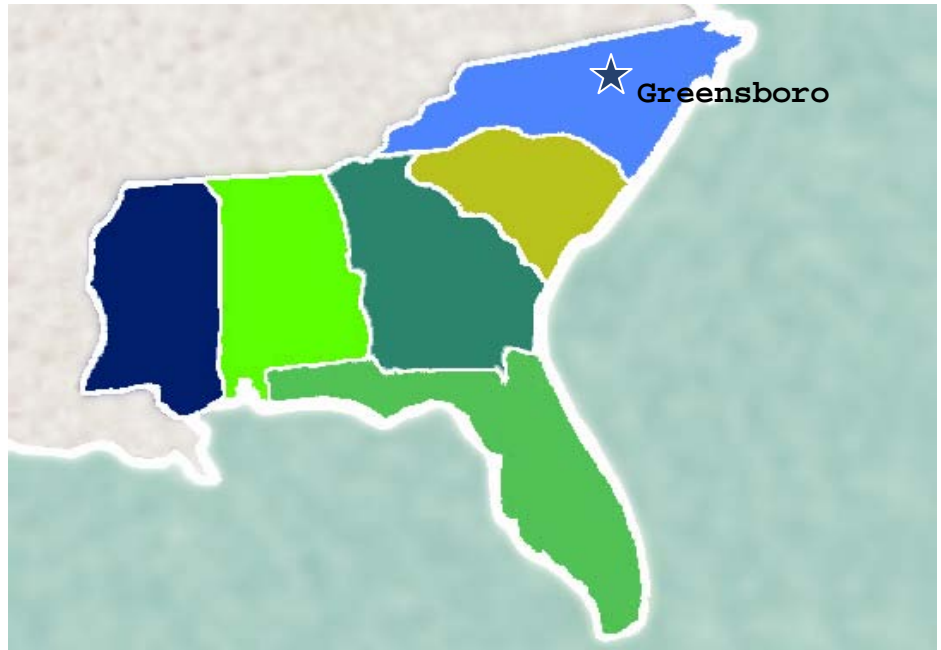
## SOUTHEAST ~ SERVECenter

April 2010, EBE # 591C

### EVIDENCE BASED EDUCATION REQUEST DESK

#### OUR GOAL

To assist educators and policymakers in their efforts to apply the evidence base to decisions about policies, programs, and practices they encounter.



#### REQUEST:

- Please provide a literature review of the ARRA assurance #4, Low-Performing Schools.
  - *Goal 4: Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest performing schools.*

## RESPONSE

### *Introduction*

School improvement and reform has again taken center stage both among educators and the public due in no small part to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's call for turning around 5,000 of the lowest performing schools, coupled with a budget of approximately \$4 billion dollars in competitive grant funding to address those needs. A recent YouGov poll conducted for *The Economist* magazine between September 25–29, 2009, revealed that over 50 percent of the respondents indicated that both education and health care to be “serious problems facing America” (“Reviving America’s schools: Ready, set, go,” 2009, p. 33). Further, the vast majority of those polled, nearly 70 percent, indicated that they were either “somewhat” (37.3%) or “very” (31.8%) dissatisfied “with the quality of America’s public schools” (“Reviving America’s schools,” 2009, p. 34). However, what do we know about our attempts at turning around low-performing schools? In particular, what is the state of this research base and have we sufficiently identified the evidence-based practices and strategies that produce improvement?

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A recent survey of the research on school reform and turnaround efforts found that many scholars feel “rigorous research” to be “a scarce commodity” in this arena (Herman et al., 2008; Viadero, 2009, p. 10). Several researchers interviewed for the survey contend that there is a lack of both turnarounds and research about successful turnaround efforts in education. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University dissented, arguing that “we have more knowledge than we actually apply” to turning around our highest needs schools (Viadero, 2009, p. 10). The inability to apply the research base we presently possess is also a theme echoed by Richard Murnane of Harvard University, who recently demonstrated the gulf between two independent streams of research and how their lack of intersection is inhibiting our ability to treat issues in educating our urban children (Murnane, 2008). Or, as Randi Weingarten of the American Federation of Teachers recently asserted, the issue is failure to institute the appropriate and faithful implementation of evidence-based reform practices and policies: “Implementation...is where reform dies” (“Reviving America’s schools,” 2009, p. 34).

This EBE Request seeks to provide an overview of recent research regarding school improvement and reform with special concentration on turning around chronically low-performing schools. The response is divided into four main sections: Research on Effective Methods for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, Frameworks for School Improvement and Turnaround, Additional Resources, and Bibliography and References. PDFs are provided for journal articles where online access is not available.

### *Research on Effective Methods for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*

Two recent documents by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) have provided insight into the state of the research on methods for turning around low performing schools. ED produced a guide for educators and policymakers entitled *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) that outlined four core areas for turnarounds to address:

1. ***Raising the Stakes: Setting High Standards for Performance:*** Holding schools accountable; and identifying low-performing schools.
2. ***Focus on Learning: Promising Strategies for Improving Student Achievement:*** Gaining control of the school environment: a prerequisite; improving curriculum and classroom instruction; starting early for school readiness; preparing for classroom change: professional development; and implementing comprehensive reform programs.
3. ***Building School Capacity: Systemic Support for the Process of Change:*** Building leadership, trust, and ownership; mobilizing resources to support school improvement; using performance data to drive continuous improvement; working in partnership with parents and community; and stimulating innovation and change.

4. ***Intervening in Chronically Low-Performing Schools:*** collaborative efforts to redesign low-performing schools; school reconstitution: a strategy of last resort; and intervention strategies: lessons and considerations.

More recently ED's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) published a Practice Guide entitled *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* (Herman et al., 2008) through What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). This Practice Guide surveys current research (mostly case studies) and rates the studies based on IES levels of evidence criteria (Herman et al., 2008, pp. 1–3). Herman and colleagues make a distinction between school improvement and strategies addressing chronically low-performing schools or “turnaround schools” (Herman et al., 2008, p. 4). The Practice Guide focuses on turnaround and not schoolwide improvement, with the distinction being one of degree of intensity and rate of change between the two processes. Four practices are identified and suggested as recommendations in the Practice Guide based on their survey of the research (Herman et al., 2008, pp. 8, 10–29):

1. ***Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership.*** Schools should make a clear commitment to dramatic changes from the status quo, and the leader should signal the magnitude and urgency of that change. A low-performing school that fails to make adequate yearly progress must improve student achievement within a short timeframe—it does not have the luxury of years to implement incremental reforms. (*Level of evidence = low*)
2. ***Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction.*** Chronically low-performing schools need to maintain a sharp focus on improving instruction at every step of the reform process. To improve instruction, schools should use data to set goals for instructional improvement, make changes to immediately and directly affect instruction, and continually reassess student learning and instructional practices to refocus the goals. (*Level of evidence = low*)
3. ***Make visible improvements early in the school turnaround process (quick wins).*** These can rally staff around the effort and overcome resistance and inertia. (*Level of evidence = low*)
4. ***Build a committed staff.*** The school leader must build a staff that is committed to the school's improvement goals and qualified to carry out school improvement. This goal may require changes in staff, such as releasing, replacing, or redeploying staff who are not fully committed to turning around student performance and bringing in new staff who are committed. (*Level of evidence = low*)

These two ED documents reflect the larger literature regarding school improvement and turning around low-performing schools. Mazzeo and Berman's (2003) best practices guide for governors published by the National Governors Association (reviewed in Herman et al., 2008) identifies five similar and overlapping principles for turning around low-performing schools (pp. 10–25):

1. ***Not all low-performing schools are the same:*** Governors should encourage state education leaders to conduct detailed assessments of the instructional programs of all schools “in need of improvement.” The state should then use this analysis to prioritize and tailor its technical assistance resources and effectively communicate its expectations for low-performing schools.
2. ***Capacity-building must be part of the solution:*** Governors should work with state education leaders to build capacity in their state’s low-performing schools, focusing on the weakest schools. States can draw on the experience of states that have successfully implemented capacity-building strategies while asserting greater quality control in selecting and monitoring assistance providers.
3. ***Districts are essential collaborators in efforts to turn around schools:*** States should partner with districts to build the capacity of low-performing schools and encourage districts to develop systems of instructional support to serve these and other schools.
4. ***Be prepared for the long haul:*** States should provide technical assistance and support to low-performing schools for several years and continue to offer support to schools no longer designated as “in need of improvement.” States should ensure their accountability system has the flexibility to identify when and how schools are improving and provide support to those schools accordingly.
5. ***Assistance to low-performing schools should be part of a larger strategy of school improvement:*** Governors should work to build capacity in schools by developing a comprehensive state policy strategy that aims to enhance the quality of teachers and principals, expand school choice options, and develop the state’s capacity to promote school improvement.

Similar findings were reported by a Ford Foundation funded study of eight Kentucky elementary schools that serve a high-needs student population free and but produced high performing achievement results (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).<sup>1</sup> When compared to their demographically similar but low-performing counterpart schools, the eight selected elementary schools scored higher on: review and alignment of curriculum; individual student assessment and instruction tailored to individual student needs; caring, nurturing environment of high expectations for students; ongoing professional development for staff that was connected to student achievement data; and efficient use of resources and instructional time (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p. 3).

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<sup>1</sup> The selection criteria included: 50 percent or more of students on free/reduced lunch; state accountability index (a combination of academic and non-academic indicators) of 80 or higher in 2003; state academic index (a composite of academic test scores) of 75 or higher for minority students and students on free/reduced lunch; progress on the state test over time; an achievement gap of fewer than 15 points between low- and middle-income students and between white and African-American students; and a range of types and locations of schools, such as urban/rural and geographic areas (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p. 2).

A recent study by American Institutes for Research (AIR) of the differences in low- and high-performing California public schools also found similar characteristics operating among consistently high-performing schools serving high needs students (Pérez et al., 2007; Pérez & Socías, 2008). Of the approximately eight thousand regular public schools, only 100 were “consistently outperforming other schools with similar characteristics year after year” (Pérez & Socías, 2008, p. 127). Among the critical findings included (Pérez & Socías, 2008, p. 126):

- Differences in school finances explained very little of the achievement gap between successful schools and other public schools in California.
- For low-performing schools, differences in teacher and administrator staff experience were stronger predictors of low-performance when compared to other schools in California.
- Successful schools differed “*from other schools mostly in terms of higher teacher quality (in aspects beyond their formal education and years of experience), higher control over the hiring of teachers, effective implementation of their curriculum using curriculum guides, data-driven decisions regarding instruction, and programs and/or interventions that complement the core curriculum*” (emphasis added; p. 126).

Four other streams of research have helped inform and develop the research on turning around low-performing schools. First, the necessity for social trust among educators, students, and parents must provide the foundation of school reform and turnaround efforts. Bryk and Schneider’s pioneering work in this area highlighted four elements of social trust in schools: respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity (2003, p. 42).<sup>2</sup> Three resulting benefits were identified in Bryk and Schneider’s research that directly impact school improvement and turnaround efforts (2003, pp. 42–43):

1. Collective decisionmaking with increased teacher buy-in is more prevalent in schools with strong in relational trust and provides a basis for reform.
2. Relational trust increases the chance that reform will diffuse broadly across the school as a result of decreasing the sense of risk associated with change, encouraging teachers to try new strategies and increasing dialog among educators.
3. Relational trust supports the hard work of improvement.

A second stream of related research, and an element found explicitly in the research discussed thus far, is the centrality of capacity-building, generally through the vehicle of staff development (King & Newmann, 2001). The third and related stream deals with the need for program coherence, a quality which many low-performing schools lack. Chronically low-performing schools frequently are provided with a multitude of resources and opportunities but lack the capacity to coordinate such resources in a targeted fashion that conforms to broader goals. This

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<sup>2</sup> See also: Bryk and Schneider (1996, 2002); and for a more recent extension of this research, Kochanek (2005).

research has provided frameworks which schools can utilize in their reform efforts (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Newmann et al., 2001).

A final and fourth element of the reform literature critical to turnaround schools is their ability (or lack thereof) to effectively partner with external collaborators and providers. Work describing the experiences and insights provided by external providers to Chicago Public Schools has been explored by Newmann and Sconzert (2000), Roderick, Easton, and Sebring (2009), and Sconzert, Smylie, and Wenzel (2004). Four central factors were found to be critical to promoting school improvement with external partners: “leadership, communication and trust, coherence and coordination, and adequate and sustained resources” (Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004, p. 45). Roderick and colleagues (2009) notes the need for external partners to fill a new role in reform efforts “to provide a research-based framework (but not a blueprint) for improvement, to provide critical measures of performance and feedback mechanisms to individual schools, and for researchers to engage in the core questions of what it will take to improve performance” (p. 3). Bryk (2009) has recently advocated for a paradigm shift in the work of school improvement with the “Design, Educational Engineering, and Development (D-EE-D) infrastructure,” recognizing the need to transform education research which currently only “weakly informs the complex processes involved in improving teaching and learning” (p. 597).

In this regard, knowing that a program *can* work is not good enough; we need to know *how to make it work* reliably over many diverse contexts and situations. This means accumulating a rigorous knowledge base on practice improvement where the real test of adequacy is its capacity to advance demonstrable, broadbased improvements in teaching and learning (emphasis original; Bryk, 2009, p. 598).

Haynes (2009) reports on the March 2009 conference organized jointly by National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which “invited Andy Calkins from the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute and Sam Redding from the National Center on Innovation and Improvement to address state board of education chairs and chief state school officers on designing a coherent strategy to turn around the lowest-performing schools” (p. 1). Five “broad parameters for turnaround strategies” were identified at the outset of the conference and included (Haynes, 2009, p. 2):

- Create a framework for school and district intervention based on research and best practice, and develop transparent policy and agency procedures that can be used to drive improvement across all schools (e.g., through audits, accreditation processes, and procedures).
- Use longitudinal data systems to monitor student achievement in content areas and by subgroups, identify the degree of intervention and support needed, and design a system that incorporates multiple tiers or levels that differ in their nature and intensity.



- Create a set of strategies that leverage resources and consequences in order to impel districts to act independently to make improvements *before* the state has to intervene to restructure (emphasis original).
- Provide human and fiscal resources to support turnaround work by developing cadres of specialists, partners, and teams (e.g., the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program and the Kentucky Distinguished Educator Program).
- Implement radically improved management structures and processes and use community partnerships and services to transform the most chronically underperforming districts and schools serving the most challenged students.

Concluding her summary of the themes and insights developed at the conference ,Haynes noted:

Throughout the symposium, the participants were challenged to think about three broad areas in considering effective turnaround strategies: 1) the political and communication dimensions of a school turnaround effort; 2) reorganizing state structures, policies, and processes; and 3) building capacity for turnaround efforts. States examined a range of issues that drive the level of commitment and capacity to pioneer new approaches to longstanding challenges in reducing enormous gaps in student attainment. A number of other themes surfaced, including the importance of honest and open discussion about the level of commitment to adopting comprehensive turnaround strategies; the need for greater coherence among board policies, agency procedures, and guidance to districts and schools; creating a culture of mutual accountability for mission-driven policy development and decision-making; expanding expertise and capacity through strategic use of networks, regional centers, partnerships, and technology; establishing a cycle of continuous evaluation and refinement to scale what works and maximize efficiencies; and building a human capital system to ensure that highly effective teachers and school leaders serve in our most challenged schools (Haynes, 2009, p. 12).

## Frameworks for School Improvement and Turnaround

This section highlights two popular frameworks that outline the elements of successful school improvement and reform processes based on research conducted with high-needs schools and systems. While both frameworks capture similar or overlapping elements, the two models have slightly different emphases. The first framework, the High-Performing, High Poverty (HHP) Readiness Model (see Figure 1) developed by Calkins and colleagues (2007a, 2007b) places the emphasis on assessing the school's/district's readiness for change and developing "local turnaround zones" within established districts to enact reform.<sup>3</sup> The second framework was developed by the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago through their ongoing partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The Five Essential Supports and their subcomponents (see Figure 2) convey the elements that CCSR research and evaluation work has revealed to be critical to school improvement efforts in urban schools (Roderick, Easton, & Sebring, 2009; Sebring et al., 2006).

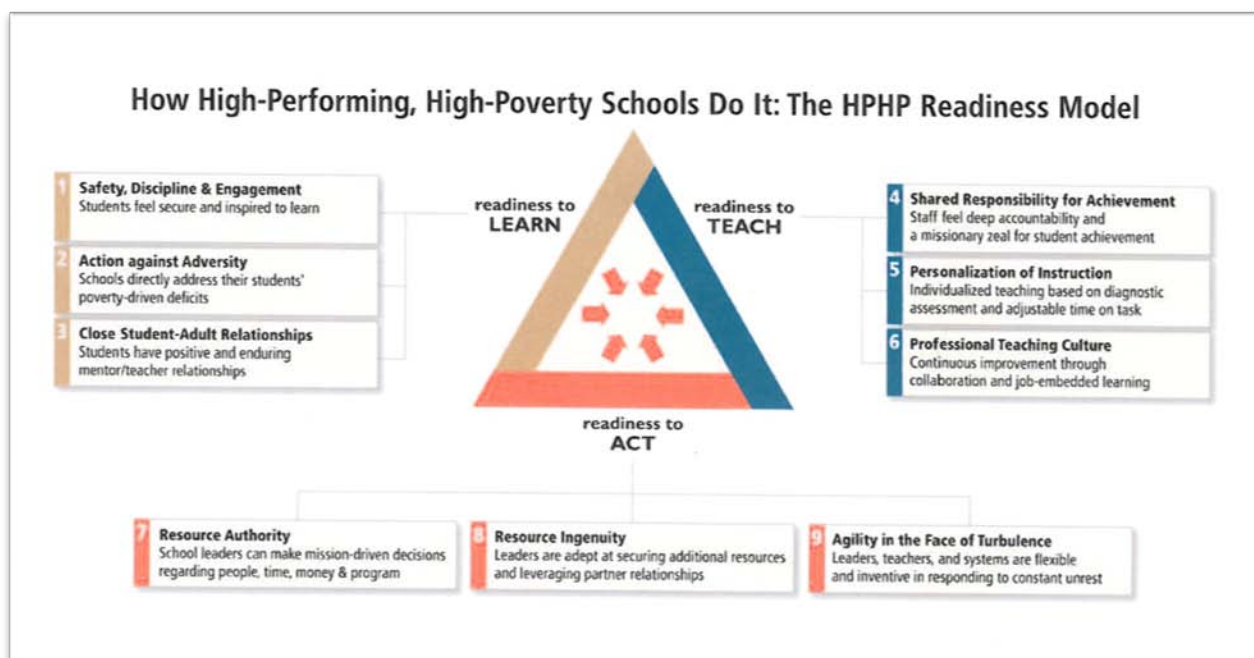


Figure 1

Source: Calkins et al. (2007a, p. 9)

<sup>3</sup> See the Additional Resources section below for further materials by Calkins and others relating to this model presented at the "Turning Around the Nation's Worst Schools" conference in March 2008.



CCSR's Five Essential Supports and their subcomponents (Sebring et al., 2006, pp. 9–17):

1. **Leadership acting as a catalyst for change:**
  - a. Inclusive leadership focused on instruction
  - b. Faculty/parent/community influence
  - c. Strategic orientation
2. **Parent-community ties:**
  - a. Teachers learn about student culture and local community
  - b. Staff engages parents and community in strengthening student learning
3. **Professional capacity:**
  - a. Quality of human resources
  - b. Values and beliefs about teacher responsibility for change
  - c. Quality of professional development
  - d. Professional community
4. **Student centered learning climate:**
  - a. Safety and order
  - b. Press towards academic achievement coupled with personal concerns for students
5. **Ambitious instruction:**
  - a. Curricular alignment
  - b. Intellectual challenge
6. Contextual resources: a climate of relational trust, a school organizational structure, and resources of the local community.

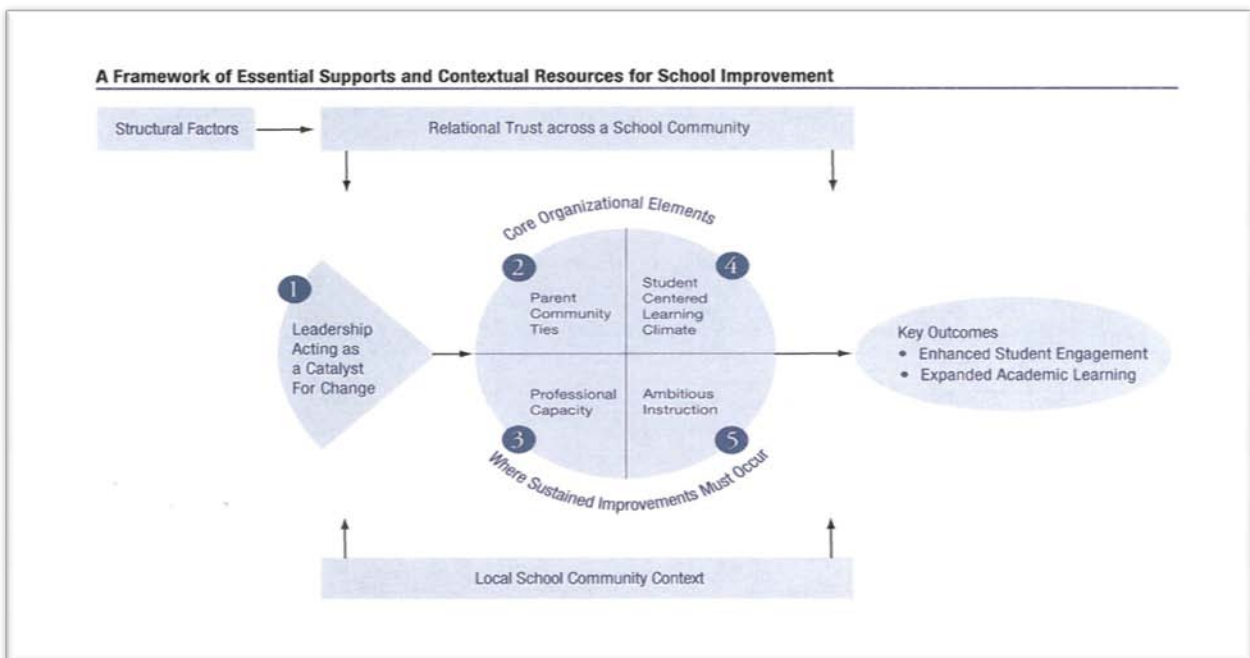


Figure 2  
Source: Sebring et al. (2006, p. 10)

## Guide to the Literature and Research

The following “annotated” research review provides a concise overview of the bibliography that follows. Citations are listed in alphabetical order by publication date, arranged by topic areas. Publications can be listed multiple times if there is sufficient topical crossover.

- **General Overviews, Briefs, & Guides:** Balfanz, 2009b; Barton & Coley, 2009; Betts, 2009; Borman, 2005, 2009; Brinson, Kowal, & Hassel, 2008; Brinson & Rhim, 2009; Chenoweth, 2009a; Haynes, 2009; O’Day & Quick, 2009; Reviving America’s schools, 2009; Viadero, 2009;
- **Achievement Gap Issues:** Balfanz, 2009b; Barton & Coley, 2009;
- **Accountability/NCLB Issues:** Balfanz et al., 2007; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Lee, 2008;
- **Alternative Indicators/Measures:** Balfanz, 2009b; Bryk, 2009; Foley et al., 2008;
- **Attendance Issues:** Balfanz, 2009b;
- **Behavioral Issues:** Balfanz, 2009b;
- **California Reform Model:**
- **Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Reform Model:** Bryk & Schneider, 1996, 2002, 2003; Bryk et al, 2010; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Hanson & Moore, 2003; Kochanek, 2005; Lee & Smith, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; Roderick, Easton, & Sebring, 2009; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Sebring et al., 2006; Sebring & Bryk, 2000;
- **College Readiness:** Balfanz, 2009a; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009;
- **Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Issues:** Borman, 2005, 2009; Borman et al., 2003;
- **Cost/Economic Impact of Dropouts, Low Performance, etc.:** Belfield & Levin, 2007; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009;
- **Dropout/Graduation Issues:** Allensworth & Easton, 2005, 2007; Balfanz, 2009a, 2009b; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009;
- **Elementary School Improvement/Reform:** Baker et al., 2008; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Bitter, O’Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; Brinson & Rhim, 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 1996, 2002, 2003; Bryk et al, 2010; Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Hanson & Moore, 2003; Kochanek, 2005; Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009; Slavin & Lake, 2008; Slavin et al., 2009;
- **External Partners & School Improvement/Reform:** Bryk, 2009; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Roderick, Easton, & Sebring, 2009;
- **Grades & Grading Issues:** Balfanz, 2009b;
- **High School Improvement/Reform:** Allensworth & Easton, 2005, 2007; Balfanz, 2009a; Balfanz et al., 2007; Brinson & Rhim, 2009; Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Corcoran & Silander, 2009; Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Slavin et al., 2008; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009;

- **Instructional/Teacher Quality Improvement/Reform Issues:** Augustine et al., 2009; Balfanz, 2009b; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003; Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; Corcoran & Silander, 2009; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; Lee & Smith, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; Newmann & Associates, 1996; O'Day & Quick, 2009; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009;
- **Language Arts/Literacy/Reading Issues:** Baker et al., 2008; Betts, 2009; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003; Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 1996, 2002, 2003; Bryk et al, 2010; Hanson & Moore, 2003; Lee, 2008; Lee & Smith, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; O'Day & Quick, 2009; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009; Slavin et al., 2008, 2009;
- **Leadership/Staffing Issues:** Augustine et al., 2009; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; Newmann & Associates, 1996; O'Day & Quick, 2009; Sebring & Bryk, 2000;
- **Math/Science Issues:** Bryk & Schneider, 1996, 2002, 2003; Bryk et al, 2010; Hanson & Moore, 2003; Lee, 2008; Lee & Smith, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; Slavin & Lake, 2008; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009;
- **Middle School Improvement/Reform:** Anfara et al., 2006; Balfanz, 2009b; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Brinson & Rhim, 2009; Brown, Anfara, & Roney, 2004; Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Hanson & Moore, 2003; Lee & Smith, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004; Slavin et al., 2008; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009;
- **NYC Reform Model:** Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010;
- **Policy/Program Coherence & School Improvement/Reform:** Newmann & Associates, 1996;
- **Professional Development/Learning Issues:** Betts, 2009; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; King & Newmann, 2001; Louis, 2005; Meehan & Cowley, 2003; Newmann & Associates, 1996; O'Day & Quick, 2009; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009;
- **Rural, Suburban and/or Urban Schools Issues:** Balfanz, 2009a; Brown, Anfara, & Roney, 2004; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009;
- **San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) Reform Model:** Betts, 2009; Betts, Zau, & King, 2005; Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003; Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; O'Day & Quick, 2009; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009;
- **School Finance/Funding Issues:** Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003; Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004;
- **School Improvement/Reform Planning Issues:** Anfara et al., 2006; Louis, 2005;
- **School Management Issues:**
- **School Restructuring:** Brinson & Rhim, 2009; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Walberg, 2007;
- **School Turn Around:** Brinson, Kowal, & Hassel, 2008; Haynes, 2009; Viadero, 2009;

- **Trust & School Improvement/Reform:** Bryk & Schneider, 1996, 2002, 2003; Bryk et al, 2010; Kochanek, 2005; and Sebring et al., 2006.
- **U.S. ED/GAO/IES Evaluations, Practice Guides, & Reports:**

## Additional Resources

- *Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement:*  
<http://www.centerforcsri.org/>
- *Center on Innovation & Improvement:* <http://www.centerii.org/>
- *Doing What Works: School Improvement:*  
[http://dww.ed.gov/topic/topic\\_landing.cfm?PA\\_ID=11&T\\_ID=21](http://dww.ed.gov/topic/topic_landing.cfm?PA_ID=11&T_ID=21)
- *Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guides:*  
[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/#turning\\_pg](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/#turning_pg)
- *Institute of Education Sciences (IES) What Works Clearinghouse:*  
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
- *Mass Insight Education and Research Institute – School Turnaround:*  
<http://www.massinsight.org/turnaround/>
- *Turning Around the Nation’s Worst Schools:* American Enterprise Institute conference from March 11, 2008 at the Wohlstetter Conference Center, Washington, D.C., in partnership with Mass Insight Education & Research Institute (audio, PDFs, PPTs, and video all available): <http://www.aei.org/event/1646>

## Methodology

In order to answer this request, we looked in Wilson Web (UNCG Education Database) and ERIC. In addition, we also searched Google using the phrases “effective methods for school reform,” “turning around low-performing schools,” etc. We also searched the websites of the following organizations: American Institutes for Research (AIR); Brookings; Center for Assessment/National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment; Center for Public Education; Center on Education Policy (CEP); Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); Economic Policy Institute (EPI); Educational Testing Service (ETS); Institute of Education Sciences (IES); Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.; MDRC; National Governors Association; National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER); RAND Corporation; The Urban Institute; and U.S. Department of Education.

## Bibliography/References

**Allensworth, E., & Easton, J.Q. (2005). *The on-track indicator as a predictor of high school graduation*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.**

**Abstract:** This indicator identifies students as on-track if they earn at least five full-year course credits and no more than one semester F in a core course in their first year of high school. On-track students are more than three and one-half times more likely to graduate from high school in four years than off-track students. The indicator is a more accurate predictor of graduation than students' previous achievement test scores or their background characteristics. Perhaps the most important finding from this report is that failures during the first year of high school make a student much less likely to graduate. Based on their findings, the authors believe that parents and teachers should carefully monitor students' grades, especially in the first semester of freshman year, when there are still many opportunities to improve grades. Helping students make a successful transition to high school during the first semester could make students more likely to graduate. This report also finds that on-track students are not necessarily the students with the highest achievement test scores. Many students with strong achievement fail to graduate, and many students who have demonstrated weaker achievement succeed in graduating. Finally, this report concludes that the particular school a student attends plays a large role in whether the student is on-track. While we expect schools to have students with differing levels of preparation for high school, differences in the number of students on-track at each school remained even when the authors controlled for students' eighth-grade test scores and socioeconomic status. This suggests that school climate and structure play a significant role in whether students succeed in high school. Schools can use the on-track indicator, which makes use of readily available data on course credits and failures, to understand what aspects of the school may be leading students to drop out.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p78.pdf>

**Allensworth, E., & Easton, J.Q. (2007). *What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public Schools* (Research Report). Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.**

**Abstract:** Almost half of all Chicago Public School students fail to graduate, and in some CPS high schools more students drop out than graduate. It is a problem that can sometimes feel overwhelming to address because the causes of dropout are myriad and complex. What is often lost in discussions about dropping out is the one factor that is most directly related to graduation—students' performance in their courses. In this research report, CCSR authors Elaine Allensworth and John Q. Easton look into the elements of course performance that predict

whether students will graduate and suggest what schools and families can do to keep more teens in school. Building on earlier CCSR research of “on-track indicators” that demonstrated a connection between failing freshman classes and dropping out, the authors found that a number of freshman-year factors can be used to predict high school graduation. Grades are as predictive as on-track indicators; almost all students with a “B” average or better at the end of their freshman year graduate, compared to only a quarter of those with a “D” average. The research also revealed how critical attendance is for freshman success. Conventional wisdom holds that eighth grade test scores are good predictors of students’ likelihood to do well in high school courses. However, course attendance is eight times more predictive of course failure in the freshman year than test scores. Just one week of absence is associated with a much greater likelihood of failure, regardless of incoming achievement. The authors also examine how school practices affect students’ grades, failure rates and attendance. Students’ grades and attendance are particularly better than expected in schools characterized by two features—supportive relationships between teachers and students, and a perception among students that the work they are doing in high school is preparing them for the future.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf>

**Alliance for Excellent Education (2010). *New York City’s strategy for improving high schools: An overview*. Washington, DC: Author.**

**Abstract:** As the nation has embraced the need to graduate every student ready for college and careers, high school reform has emerged at the top of the education agenda. Many local and state leaders are implementing strategies to address low performance and close achievement gaps. As federal policymakers look ahead to opportunities to support this work—including through the upcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—they are eagerly looking to districts that have been engaged in major reform to understand the implications for supporting and encouraging these reforms at scale. One extremely relevant case study is New York City—the nation’s largest and most diverse school district—where Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein have prioritized redesigning high schools and improving outcomes as part of a districtwide reform effort. This brief, the first in a series, will set the stage, describing the theory of action underlying the efforts of the New York City Department of Education and some of the specific strategies it has employed to improve high schools.

**Link:** <http://www.all4ed.org/files/NYCOverviewJan2010.pdf>



**Anfara, Jr., V.A., Patterson, F., Buehler, A., & Gearity, B. (2006). School improvement planning in East Tennessee middle schools: A content analysis and perceptions study. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(4), 277–300.**

**Abstract:** This mixed-methods study focuses on school improvement planning in middle schools in East Tennessee. Utilizing the improvement plans of 17 middle schools and surveys that were administered to 493 teachers and 35 administrators, this study found that there was (a) an overemphasis on academic goals, (b) an overreliance on the use of “homemade” data-collection instruments, (c) a lack of attention to the effectiveness of school leadership, and (d) no mention of research-based, middle school best practices. Policy recommendations are offered.

**Augustine, C.H., Gonzalez, G., Ikemoto, G.S., Russell, J., Zellman, G.L., Constant, L., Armstrong, J., & Dembosky, J.W. (2009). *Improving school leadership: The promise of cohesive leadership systems* (MG-885-WF). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.**

**Abstract:** Improving the nation’s public schools is one of the highest priorities of federal, state, and local government in America. Recent research has shown that the quality of the principal is, among school-based factors, second only to the quality of the teacher in contributing to what students learn in the classroom. New programs to develop school leaders who can exercise vigilance over instruction and support effective teaching practices are not likely to succeed, however, if they are inconsistent with other state and district policies affecting school leadership. The Wallace Foundation, which focuses its grantmaking in education primarily on school leadership, has posited that well-coordinated policies and initiatives to develop leadership standards, provide high-quality training, and improve the conditions that affect principals’ work will increase their ability to improve instruction in their schools. This study documents the actions taken by the Foundation’s grantees to create a more cohesive set of policies and initiatives to improve instructional leadership in schools; describes how states and districts have worked together to forge such policies and initiatives around school leadership; and examines the hypothesis that more-cohesive systems do in fact improve school leadership. The study found that it is possible to build more-cohesive leadership systems and that such efforts appear to be a promising approach to developing school leaders engaged in improving instruction. Although the study did not find evidence that the full underlying theory behind this initiative is sound, it did find a correlation between improved conditions for principals and their engagement in instructional practices.

**Link:** [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG885.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG885.pdf)

**Baker, S.K., Smolkowski, K., Katz, R., Fien, H., Seeley, J.R., Kame'enui, E.J., & Beck, C.T. (2008). Reading fluency as a predictor of reading proficiency in low-performing, high-poverty schools. *School Psychology Review*, 37(1), 18–37.**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine oral reading fluency (ORF) in the context of a large-scale federal reading initiative conducted in low-performing, high-poverty schools. The objectives were to (a) investigate the relation between ORF and comprehensive reading tests, (b) examine whether slope of performance over time on ORF predicted performance on comprehensive reading tests over and above initial level of performance, and (c) test how well various models of ORF and performance on high-stakes reading tests in Year 1 predicted performance on high-stakes reading tests in Year 2. Subjects were four cohorts of students in Grades 1–3, with each cohort representing approximately 2,400 students. Results support the use of ORF in the early grades to screen students for reading problems and monitor reading growth over time. The use of ORF in reading reform and implications for school psychologists are discussed.

**Balfanz, R. (2009a). Can the American high school become an avenue of advancement for all? *Future of Children*, 19(1), 17–36.**

**Abstract:** As the twenty-first century opens, says Robert Balfanz, the United States is developing a deep social consensus that American high schools should ensure that all adolescents graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary schooling and training. Balfanz asks how well high schools are succeeding in this mission and whether they can ultimately fulfill it. Balfanz first surveys the structure and demographics of today's high schools. Forty percent of white students attend high schools that are 90 percent or more white, while roughly one-third of Latino and African American students attend high schools that are 90 percent or more minority. Minority students are also much more likely than white students to attend high schools that confront the challenges of concentrated poverty. In predominantly white, affluent suburban school districts, nearly every student arrives ready for high school work and then graduates. In all-minority inner city schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, most entering students lack a good middle school education, and only half to two-thirds graduate. With only a third to a half of high school graduates today prepared to succeed in college, how likely is it that American high schools will succeed in their mission of preparing all students for additional schooling or training? Balfanz argues that reforms over the past twenty-five years offer some hope. The standards and accountability movement has made the American high school a more focused and academic place. College preparatory coursetaking has increased substantially, as has standardized testing. Mandatory exit exams have been imposed. And during the past decade, in particular, reformers have made a concerted effort to improve the low-performing high schools that serve low-income and minority students. Investments by the federal government and by

foundations have led to the development of several types of reforms that have been proven effective, thus raising hopes that the nation's lowest-performing high schools can better serve their students. Still, the American high school has a considerable way to go to be able to prepare all students for further schooling or training. To advance all its students, it must find a way to bring to scale the methods and mechanisms, conditions, and know-how that have enabled a few low-performing high schools to achieve this transformation.

**Balfanz, R. (2009b). *Putting middle grades students on the graduation path: A policy and practice brief*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.**

**Abstract:** Research has shown that, particularly in high-poverty environments, students' middle grades experiences are critical in launching them toward achievement and attainment or placing them on a path of frustration, failure, and early exit from the only secure path to adult success—finishing high school. Our challenge is to use our considerable knowledge of how the middle grades can be transformed to enable all students to stay on the graduation path. “Putting Middle Grades Students on the Graduation Path: A Policy and Practice Brief” covers the major research findings and shares specific policy and practice suggestions to improve student success. This policy and practice brief is based on more than a decade of research and development work at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) at Johns Hopkins University as well as direct field experience in more than 30 middle schools implementing comprehensive reform and a long-standing collaboration with the Philadelphia Education Fund and several middle schools that serve high-poverty populations in Philadelphia.

**Executive Summary:**

[http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research\\_from\\_the\\_Field/Executive\\_Summary\\_Balfanz.pdf](http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Executive_Summary_Balfanz.pdf)

**Full Report:**

[http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research\\_from\\_the\\_Field/Policy\\_Brief\\_Balfanz.pdf](http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf)

**Balfanz, R., Legters, N., West, T.C., & Weber, L.M. (2007). Are NCLB's measures, incentives, and improvement strategies the right ones for the nation's low-performing high schools? *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 559–593.**

**Abstract:** This article examines the extent to which adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a valid and reliable indicator of improvement in low-performing high schools. For a random subsample of 202 high schools, the authors investigate the school characteristics and the federal and state policy contexts that influence their AYP status. Logistic regression models reveal that the

strongest predictors of AYP status in low-performing high schools are the number of student subgroups for which schools are accountable and their No Child Left Behind improvement status. Analysis of state report card data further paints a confusing landscape in which improving low-performing high schools are sanctioned whereas similar schools showing less improvement are not.

**Barton, P E., & Coley, R.J. (2009). *Parsing the Achievement Gap II*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.**

**Abstract:** This Policy Information Report follows up on a 2003 report *Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress*. This updated report tracks 16 factors related to academic performance, ranging from low birth weight to teacher quality. While some gaps have narrowed, other have widened.

**Link:** <http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf>

**Belfield, C.R., & Levin, H.M. (Eds.) (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.**

**Abstract:** While the high cost of education draws headlines, the cost of not educating America's children goes largely ignored. *The Price We Pay* remedies this oversight by highlighting the private, fiscal, and public costs of inadequate education. Leading scholars from a broad range of fields—including economics, education, demography, and public health—attach hard numbers to the relationship between educational attainment and income, health, crime, and dependence on public assistance. They also explore policy interventions that could boost the education system's performance and explain why demographic trends make the challenge of educating our youth so urgent today. Improving educational outcomes for at-risk youth is more than a noble goal. It is an investment, one with the potential to yield benefits that far outstrip its costs. *The Price We Pay* analyzes both sides of the balance sheet and suggests which policies are most likely to pay off.

**Contents:** Acknowledgments -- 1 The education attainment gap: who's affected, how much, and why it matters / Clive R. Belfield and Henry M. Levin -- Part One: Assessing the scope of the challenge -- 2 Beyond educational attainment: A multifaceted approach to examining economic inequalities / Richard Rothstein and Tamara Wilder -- 3 Diversity and the demographic dividend: Achieving educational equity in an aging white society / Marta Tienda and Sigal Alon -- 4 Implications of educational inequality in a global economy / Thomas Bailey -- Part Two: Quantifying the costs of inadequate education -- 5 Consequences for the labor market / Cecilia Elena Rouse -- 6 Consequences in health status and costs / Peter Muennig -- 7 Crime and the

costs of criminal justice / Enrico Moretti -- 8 Welfare and the costs of public assistance -- Jane Waldfogel, Irwin Garfinkel, and Brendan Kelly -- Part Three: Directions for reform -- 9 Educational interventions to raise high school graduation rates / Henry M. Levin and Clive R. Belfield -- 10 The promise of early childhood interventions / Clive R. Belfield -- 11 Toward excellence with equity: the role of parenting and transformative school reform / Ronald F. Ferguson -- 12 The need for comprehensive educational equity / Michael A. Rebell -- Contributors -- Index.

**Link:** <http://www.brookings.edu/press/Books/2007/pricewepay.aspx>

**Betts, J.R. (2009). The San Diego Blueprint for Student Success: A retrospective overview and commentary. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 120–129.**

**Abstract:** In a series of reforms started in 1998 and formalized with the 2000 introduction of the Blueprint for Student Success, the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) implemented a wide-ranging series of reforms designed to boost the literacy skills of students. This article provides an overview of the reforms, assesses the contributions made by the articles in this special issue of JESPAR, and highlights complementarities between this research and related quantitative research. Overall, the evidence suggests that the model of professional development in the 8th largest district in the nation took root and led to tangible changes in the classroom. Achievement analyses by Betts (2005), Betts, Zau, and King (2005), and Betts, Zau, and Koedel (2008) have suggested that the reading achievement of students improved in the lower grades as a result of the reforms, but dipped somewhat in high school. This article concludes with thoughts on the political and financial challenges to sustaining such reforms and the practical difficulties of evaluating their impact.

**Betts, J.R., Zau, A.C., & King, K. (2005). *From Blueprint to reality: San Diego's education reforms*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.**

**Abstract:** During the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 school years, the San Diego Unified School District introduced a focused set of reforms to improve San Diego students' reading and literacy skills called the Blueprint for Student Success. The changes the district implemented included new teaching materials, double- and even triple-length English classes where necessary, additional teacher training, and more classroom time for reading practice and instruction. This report presents the first student-level evaluation of that effort and shows that the Blueprint reforms in large part accomplished what they set out to do: reading scores at elementary and middle-school level improved among students who participated in Blueprint activities, and

achievement gaps among different racial and ethnic, language, and socioeconomic groups narrowed.

**Link:** [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_1005JBR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1005JBR.pdf)

**Betts, J.R., Zau, A.C., & Rice, L.A. (2003). *Determinants of student achievement: New evidence from San Diego*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.**

**Abstract:** This report presents the results of a unique study conducted by the authors in collaboration with the San Diego Unified School District (the second-largest district in California). For this study, the authors compiled a highly detailed, student-level database that enabled them to link factors influencing student achievement in ways that have not been possible with the state-level data generally used in such studies. In this report, they examine resource inequalities across schools, explore trends in achievement, and, most important, provide detailed statistical estimates of the school and classroom factors that most influence student achievement.

Some of their findings:

- The lowest socioeconomic status (SES) schools generally receive fewer resources than more-affluent schools, especially in the case of teacher qualifications in elementary schools.
- An individual student's rate of learning is influenced by the academic ability of peers in his or her classroom and grade. Classroom-level peer effects are stronger in elementary school. Grade-level peer effects are stronger in middle and high school.
- Class size influences gains in reading achievement in elementary grades but does not appear to be of significant importance in middle and high schools.
- Teacher qualifications can make a difference, but the various measures of qualification have sporadic and varying effects in elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as on gains in math and reading achievement.

The authors conclude the study with a discussion of the implications of their findings, especially in light of the grim new financial reality facing most school districts as a result of California's serious budget deficits.

**Link:** [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_803JBR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_803JBR.pdf)

**Bitter, C., O'Day, J., Gubbins, P., & Socias, M. (2009). What works to improve student literacy achievement? An examination of instructional practices in a balanced literacy approach. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 17–44.**



**Abstract:** A core assumption of the San Diego City Schools (SDCS) reform effort was that improved instructional practices, aligned with a balanced literacy approach, would be effective in improving student outcomes. This article explores this hypothesis by presenting findings from an analysis of classroom instruction data collected in 101 classrooms in 9 high-poverty elementary schools. Data were collected using a literacy observation tool adapted from prior research. The study found a prevalent focus on reading comprehension instruction and on students' active engagement in making meaning from text. Teachers' use of higher-level questions and discussion about text were substantially higher than that found by a prior study using the same instrument in similar classrooms elsewhere. Hierarchical Linear Modeling analyses of instruction and student outcome data indicate that teacher practices related to the higher-level meaning of text, writing instruction, and strategies for accountable talk were associated with growth in students' reading comprehension.

**Borman, G.D. (2005). National efforts to bring reform to scale in high-poverty schools: Outcomes and implications. In L. Parker (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education*, 29 (pp. 1–28). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.**

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Borman, G.D. (2009). *The past, present, and future of comprehensive school reform* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.**

**Abstract:** The last major review of the achievement outcomes of comprehensive school reform (CSR) models was conducted in 2003. Despite the growing evidence base supporting CSR, the program was discontinued by the federal government in 2007. Now, six years after the 2003 meta-analysis, the study's lead author, Geoffrey Borman, revisits the results and interprets how the policy and research landscape has evolved over the years. He concludes that in terms of increased student achievement, CSR appears to: (1) have an overall positive effect; (2) be effective whether a school is relatively lower or higher on poverty measures; (3) increase its effectiveness for an individual school the longer it is implemented there; (4) include a variety of models, with a number of them generating strong evidence of effectiveness over the years; and (5) depend for its effectiveness more on program implementation than on whether it contains a predetermined set of federally required components. Schools and district continue to employ a number of CSR models and fund them with Title I and other monies.

**Link:** [http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/Center\\_RB\\_Aug09.pdf](http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/Center_RB_Aug09.pdf)

**Borman, G.D., Hewes, G.M., Overman, L.T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(2), 125–230.**

**Abstract:** This meta-analysis reviews research on the achievement effects of comprehensive school reform (CSR) and summarizes the specific effects of 29 widely implemented models. There are limitations on the overall quantity and quality of the research base, but the overall effects of CSR appear promising. The combined quantity, quality, and statistical significance of evidence from three models, in particular, set them apart. Whether evaluations are conducted by developers or by third-party evaluators and whether evaluators use one-group pre-post designs or control groups are important factors for understanding differences in CSR effects. Schools that implemented CSR models for 5 years or more showed particularly strong effects, and the benefits were consistent across schools of varying poverty levels. A long-term commitment to research-proven educational reform is needed to establish a strong marketplace of scientifically based CSR models.

**Brinson, D., Kowal, J., & Hassel, B.C. (2008). *School turnarounds: Actions and results*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement.**

**Abstract:** This report provides descriptive, real-world vignettes that illustrate the actions that successful school leaders have taken to turn around low-performing schools.

**Link:**

<http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Turnaround%20Actions%20and%20Results%203%2024%2008%20with%20covers.pdf>

**Brinson, D., & Rhim, L.M. (2009). *Breaking the habit of low performance: Successful school restructuring stories*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement.**

**Abstract:** Too often, restructuring efforts fail, but these and other schools featured in this report found the right recipe for change that resulted in improved student performance and school transformation.

**Link:** [http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Breaking\\_the\\_habit\\_of\\_low\\_performance.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Breaking_the_habit_of_low_performance.pdf)

**Brown, K.M., Anfara, Jr., V.A., & Roney, K. (2004). Student achievement in high-performing, suburban middle schools and low-performing, urban middle schools: Plausible explanations for the differences. *Education and Urban Society*, 36(4), 428–456.**

**Abstract:** Utilizing a qualitative, multisite case study design and the theoretical framework of Hoy and Hannum (1997), the design and execution of this research investigates plausible explanations for the difference in student achievement between high-performing (HPS) suburban middle schools and low-performing (LPS) urban middle schools. Aside from the great disparity in SES, test scores, and funding, findings show stark contrasts between the 2 types of schools with regard to the technical, managerial, and institutional levels of the schools' organizational health (i.e., teacher efficacy, curriculum articulation, student expectations, collegiality, instructional leadership, institutional integrity, etc.). Outlining quick fixes and easy-to-follow reform initiatives that are not so easy to achieve is a grave disservice and, under these circumstances, promoting best practices as an ecological package promotes false hope. The power of this study encourages us to move away from the structures per se and return to the deeper meaning and purpose undergirding them.

**Bryk, A.S. (2009). Support a science of performance improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(8), 597–600.**

**Abstract:** The article offers suggestions on how U.S. federal policies regarding educational research and development (R&D) can be modified to improve academic achievement. The author recommends the creation of a design, educational engineering and development (D-EE-D) infrastructure to support the development and testing of educational innovations through a blend of action research and systematic inquiry. He comments on how R&D systems can be applied to teacher professional development programs and teacher education through the use of professional learning communities. [*PDF included*]

**Bryk, A.S., & Schneider, B. (1996). *Social trust: A moral resource for school improvement*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.**

**Abstract:** Do trusting relationships among adults in a school help children learn? In an era of widespread distrust of educational institutions and their ability to educate children, Chicago attempted to expand local control in order to improve its schools, calling on parents, teachers, and administrators to “join together in sustained cooperative efforts around school improvement.” This report reveals that a trusting school climate is an important resource for improving teaching and learning.

**Link:**

[http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/socialtrust\\_amoralresourceforschoolimprovement.pdf](http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/socialtrust_amoralresourceforschoolimprovement.pdf)

**Bryk, A.S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.**

**Abstract:** [Taken from CCSR]: Most Americans agree on the necessity of education reform, but there is little consensus about how this goal might be achieved. The rhetoric of standards and vouchers has occupied center stage, polarizing public opinion and affording little room for reflection on the intangible conditions that make for good schools. *Trust in Schools* engages this debate with a compelling examination of the importance of social relationships in the successful implementation of school reform. Over the course of three years, Bryk and Schneider, together with a diverse team of other researchers and school practitioners, studied reform in twelve Chicago elementary schools. Each school was undergoing extensive reorganization in response to the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988, which called for greater involvement of parents and local community leaders in their neighborhood schools. Drawing on years of longitudinal survey and achievement data, as well as in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and local community leaders, the authors develop a thorough account of how effective social relationships—which they term relational trust—can serve as a prime resource for school improvement. Using case studies of the network of relationships that make up the school community, Bryk and Schneider examine how the myriad social exchanges that make up daily life in a school community generate, or fail to generate, a successful educational environment. The personal dynamics among teachers, students, and their parents, for example, influence whether students regularly attend school and sustain their efforts in the difficult task of learning. In schools characterized by high relational trust, educators were more likely to experiment with new practices and work together with parents to advance improvements. As a result, these schools were also more likely to demonstrate marked gains in student learning. In contrast, schools with weak trust relations saw virtually no improvement in their reading or mathematics scores. *Trust in Schools* demonstrates convincingly that the quality of social relationships operating in and around schools is central to their functioning, and strongly predicts positive student outcomes. This book offer insights into how trust can be built and sustained in school communities, and identifies some features of public school systems that can impede such development. Bryk and Schneider show how a broad base of trust across a school community can provide a critical resource as education professional and parents embark on major school reforms.

**Contents:** About the Authors -- Foreword -- Acknowledgments -- Pt. I. Framing Themes and Illuminating Theory -- Ch. 1. The Social Foundations of Schooling: An Overlooked Dimension for Improvement -- Ch. 2. Relational Trust -- Pt. II. Relational Trust in Three Urban School

Communities -- Ch. 3. Ridgeway Elementary School: The Costs of Conflicted Leadership -- Ch. 4. Thomas Elementary School: Cultural Diversity as an Obstacle to Trust -- Ch. 5. Holiday Elementary School: Dedicated to the Welfare of the Children -- Pt. III. Effects and Implications -- Ch. 6. Relational Trust and Improving Academic Achievement -- Ch. 7. Analytic and Policy Implications for School Reform -- Appendix A Description of the Field Study -- Appendix B Measures and Other Variables Used -- Appendix C Analysis Details -- Notes -- References -- Index.

**Bryk, A.S., & Schneider, B. (2003). *Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. Educational Leadership, 60(6), 40–44.***

**Abstract:** Presents a study that examined the role of relational trust in the building effective education communities in elementary schools in Chicago, Illinois. Information on the social exchanges in schools; Factors to consider regarding relational trust; Benefits of relational trust.

**Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [See also Sebring et al., 2006]**

**Abstract:** In 1988, the Chicago public school system decentralized, granting parents and communities significant resources and authority to reform their schools in dramatic ways. To track the effects of this bold experiment, the authors of *Organizing Schools for Improvement* collected a wealth of data on elementary schools in Chicago. Over a seven-year period they identified one hundred elementary schools that had substantially improved—and one hundred that had not. What did the successful schools do to accelerate student learning? The authors of this illuminating book identify a comprehensive set of practices and conditions that were key factors for improvement, including school leadership, the professional capacity of the faculty and staff, and a student-centered learning climate. In addition, they analyze the impact of social dynamics, including crime, critically examining the inextricable link between schools and their communities. Putting their data onto a more human scale, they also chronicle the stories of two neighboring schools with very different trajectories. The lessons gleaned from this groundbreaking study will be invaluable for anyone involved with urban education.

**Contents:** Acknowledgments -- Prologue: A Tale of Two Schools -- Introduction: A Rare Opportunity to Learn about School Improvement -- 1 Developing Appropriate Outcome Indicators -- 2 A Framework of Essential Supports -- 3 Testing the Framework of the Essential Supports -- 4 Probing Deeper: Organizational Mechanisms -- 5 Trust, Size, and Stability: Key Enablers -- 6 The Influences of Community Context -- Summary and Conclusions -- Appendix

A: Socioeconomic Status Factor -- Appendix B: A Value-Added Indicator: A School's Academic -- Productivity Profile -- Appendix C: Overview of the Fourteen Indicators for the Five Essential Supports -- Appendix D: Probability Experiment to Evaluate Results Presented in Figure 3.3 -- Appendix E: Interview Questions from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods -- Appendix F: Coefficients from Analyses of Leadership in Chapter 4 -- Appendix G: Value-Added Replication Results for 1997 through 2005 -- Appendix H: Efforts of the Consortium on Chicago School Research to Build More Productive Ties between Research, Practice, and Policy to Improve Practice -- Notes -- References -- Index.

**Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007a). *The turnaround challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools*. Boston: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.**

**Abstract:** [Taken from the Executive Summary]: Despite steadily increasing urgency about the nation's lowest-performing schools—those in the bottom five percent—efforts to turn these schools around have largely failed. Marginal change has led to marginal (or no) improvement. These schools, the systems supporting them, and our management of the change process require fundamental rethinking, not incremental change. What does successful school turnaround entail?

- **Recognition of the challenge.** Turnaround is a different and far more difficult undertaking than school improvement. It should be viewed within education, as it is in other sectors, as a distinct professional discipline that requires specialized experience, training, and support.
- **Dramatic, fundamental change.** Turnaround requires transformation. Schools that effectively serve high-poverty, highly-diverse student enrollments similar to those that typically attend our lowest-performing schools tend to operate very differently from traditional models.
- **Urgency.** Turnaround should produce significant achievement gains within two years, while readying the school for subsequent maturation into a high-performance organization.
- **Supportive operating conditions.** Turnaround leaders must be empowered to make decisions regarding staff, schedule, budget, and program based on mission, strategy, and data.
- **New-model, high-capacity partners.** Turnaround demands skillful change management at the ground level. States, districts, and foundations must develop a new resource base of external, lead turnaround partners to integrate multiple services in support of clusters of turnaround schools.
- **New state and district structures.** Turnaround requires innovation from policymakers at all levels. States and districts should create special turnaround offices that—like



turnaround schools themselves—have the flexible set of operating rules and the resources necessary to carry out their mission.

*Executive Summary:* This eight-page summary provides an overview of the main points and recommendations in the report. It is available for viewing and for free download as a pdf file. If you download it and print it, do so in “landscape” mode and, if possible, with full-color printing for best results. *Main Report:* The full report is available for viewing and for free download as a pdf file. It is 110 pages long. If you download it and print it, do so in “landscape” mode and with two-sided printing for best results.

**Link:** <http://www.massinsight.org/turnaround/challenge.aspx>

**Executive Summary:**

[http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge\\_ExecSumm.pdf](http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_ExecSumm.pdf)

**Main Report:**

[http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge\\_MainReport.pdf](http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf)

**Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007b).** *The turnaround challenge: Why America’s best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools: Supplement to the main report.* Boston: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.

**Abstract:** This supplementary report provides more detailed information and profiles of school-intervention strategies in ten states and four districts, along with further analysis of high-performing, high-poverty schools. It is 94 pages long. As with the main report, print this document in “landscape” mode and with two-side printing for best results.

**Supplemental Report:**

[http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge\\_SupplementalReport.pdf](http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_SupplementalReport.pdf)

**Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009).** *School restructuring under No Child Left Behind: What works when? A guide for education leaders.* Washington, DC: Learning Point Associates.

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Link:** [http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/School\\_Restructuring\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/School_Restructuring_Guide.pdf)

**Chenoweth, K. (2007).** *It's being done: Academic success in unexpected schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

**Abstract:** This straightforward and inspiring book takes readers into schools where educators believe-and prove-that all children, even those considered “hard-to-teach,” can learn to high standards. Their teachers and principals refuse to write them off and instead show how thoughtful instruction, high expectations, stubborn commitment, and careful consideration of each child’s needs can result in remarkable improvements in student achievement.

**Contents:** Spelunking through the data -- Frankford Elementary School, Frankford, Delaware -- University Park Campus School, Worcester, Massachusetts -- Oakland Heights Elementary School, Russellville, Arkansas -- Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School, Elmont, New York -- Lincoln Elementary School, Mount Vernon, New York -- Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School, St. Paul, Minnesota -- Centennial Place Elementary School, Atlanta, Georgia -- Lapwai Elementary School, Lapwai, Idaho -- Granger High School, Granger, Washington -- M. Hall Stanton Elementary School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania -- West Jasper Elementary School, West Jasper, Alabama -- East Millsboro Elementary School, East Millsboro, Delaware -- Capitol View Elementary School, Atlanta, Georgia -- Port Chester Middle School, Port Chester, New York -- The Benwood Initiative, Chattanooga, Tennessee -- Conclusion: what can we learn?

**Chenoweth, K. (2009a).** Piece by piece: How schools solved the achievement puzzle and soared. *American Educator*, 33(3), 15–23.

**Abstract:** After five years of visiting high-poverty and high-minority schools that have demonstrated success, Karin Chenoweth has noticed a handful of key characteristics that these schools share: genuine teacher collaboration, a sharp focus on what students must learn, assessments that inform instruction, and strong relationships between adults and children.

**Link:** [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/issues/fall2009/chenoweth.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/fall2009/chenoweth.pdf)

**Chenoweth, K. (2009b).** *How it's being done: Urgent lessons from unexpected schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

**Abstract:** *How It's Being Done* offers much-needed help to educators, providing detailed accounts of the ways in which unexpected schools—those with high-poverty and high-minority student populations—have dramatically boosted student achievement and diminished (and often eliminated) achievement gaps. *How It's Being Done* builds on Karin Chenoweth's widely hailed earlier volume, "*It's Being Done*," providing specific information about how such schools have exceeded expectations and met with unprecedented levels of success.

**Contents:** Foreword / Pedro Noguera -- Introduction -- 1 Massachusetts Is Number One: How Did That Happen? -- 2 P.S./M.S. 124 Osmond A. Church School, Queens, New York -- 3 Imperial High School, Imperial, California -- 4 Ware Elementary School, Fort Riley, Kansas -- 5 Lockhart Junior High School, Lockhart, Texas -- 6 Norfolk Elementary School, Norfolk, Arkansas -- 7 Wells Elementary School, Steubenville, Ohio -- 8 Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, Roxbury, Massachusetts -- 9 Graham Road Elementary School, Falls Church, Virginia -- Conclusion: Inventing the Wheel -- Acknowledgments -- About the Author -- Index.

**Chiang, H. (2009). How accountability pressure on failing schools affects student achievement. *Journal of Public Economics*, 93(9–10), 1045–1057.**

**Abstract:** Although an emerging body of evidence has shown that the threat of sanctions on low-performing schools can raise student test scores in the short run, the extent to which these test score improvements are due to schools' manipulation of the accountability system has remained uncertain. In this paper, I provide two new strands of evidence to evaluate the relative importance of educational reforms and gaming behavior in generating test score gains by threatened schools. First, using a regression discontinuity design that exploits Florida's system of imposing sanction threats on the basis of a cutoff level of performance, I estimate medium-run effects on student test scores from having attended a threatened elementary school. Threat-induced math improvements from elementary school largely persist at least through the first 1 to 2 years of middle school, while evidence for persistence of reading improvements is less consistent. Second, I analyze the effects of sanction threats on various features of educational production, and I find that sanction threats raise school spending on instructional technology, curricular development, and teacher training. Both strands of evidence are consistent with a predominant role for educational reforms in generating test score gains by threatened schools.

**Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H.F., & Vigdor, J.L. (2005). Who teaches whom? Race and the distribution of novice teachers. *Economics of Education Review*, 24(4), 377–392.**

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on one potentially important contributor to the achievement gap between black and white students—differences in their exposure to novice teachers. We present a model that explores the pressures that may lead school administrators to distribute novice teachers unequally across or within schools. Using a rich micro-level data set provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, we find that novice teachers are distributed among schools and among classrooms within schools in a way that disadvantages black students.

**Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H.F., Vigdor, J.L., & Diaz, R A. (2004). Do school accountability systems make it more difficult for low-performing schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 23(2), 251–271.**

**Abstract:** Administrative data from North Carolina are used to explore the extent to which that state's relatively sophisticated school-based accountability system has exacerbated the challenges that schools serving low-performing students face in retaining and attracting high-quality teachers. Most clear are the adverse effects on retention rates, and hence on teacher turnover, in such schools. Less clear is the extent to which that higher turnover has translated into a decline in the average qualifications of the teachers in the low-performing schools. Other states with more primitive accountability systems can expect even greater adverse effects on teacher turnover in low-performing schools.

**Corcoran, T., & Silander, M. (2009). Instruction in high schools: The evidence and the challenge. *Future of Children*, 19(1), 157–183.**

**Abstract:** The combined effects of standards-based reforms and accountability demands arising from recent technological and economic changes, say Tom Corcoran and Megan Silander, are requiring high schools to accomplish something they have never been required to do—ensure that substantially all students achieve at a relatively high level. Meeting that challenge, say the authors, will require high schools to improve the effectiveness of their core technology—instruction. The authors first examine how organizational structures affect instruction. Most high schools, they say, organize instruction by subject or discipline, thus encouraging an isolated and independent approach to teaching rather than one in which teachers are guided by a shared vision or goals. Many schools have focused on increasing teacher collaboration, often through teaming, interdisciplinary teaching, or professional learning communities. Citing limited evidence that these reforms improve instruction and learning, Corcoran and Silander urge researchers to examine whether the changes help schools implement specific instructional reforms and support sustained efforts to improve instruction. Next the authors explore the effects on student learning of instructional strategies such as interdisciplinary teaching, cooperative learning, project-based learning, adaptive instruction, inquiry, and dialogic teaching. The evidence suggests the power of

well-designed student grouping strategies, of allowing students to express their ideas and questions, and of offering students challenging tasks. But, the authors say, less than half of American high school students report working in groups, and little class time is devoted to student-centered discussions. The authors conclude that schools should promote the use of proven instructional practices. In addition, teachers should systematically monitor how students vary in what they are learning and adapt their instruction in response to students' progress and needs, in the process learning more about what variations in instruction respond most effectively to common variations in students' learning. The authors argue that such "adaptive instruction" has the greatest potential for success in today's standards-based policy environment with its twin values of equity and excellence. [PDF included]

**Designs for Change (1998).** *What makes these schools stand out: Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of improved reading achievement.* Chicago: Author.

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Summary:** [http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/final\\_summ.pdf](http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/final_summ.pdf)

**Full Report:** <http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/SOScomplete.pdf>

**Designs for Change (2005).** *The big picture: School-initiated reforms, centrally initiated reforms, and elementary school achievement in Chicago (1990 to 2005).* Chicago: Author. [See also: Bryk et al., 2010; Jacob & Lefgren, 2009; and Sebring et al., 2006]

**Abstract:** The study found major achievement gains in 144 public K–8 inner city grade schools—all of them low achieving in 1990—that have, on average, moved from 20% above the national average in 1990 to the national average of 50%. These schools are 87% low-income and serve 100,000 students—a network of radically improved schools in Chicago as large as the entire Baltimore school system. Research by DFC and others indicates the distinctive practices of these “Substantially Up Schools,” making it possible for other schools to learn from their success. The study found no significant impact on achievement of three expensive central office initiatives: school probation, grade retention (flunking), and the assignment of Reading Specialists to low-achieving schools. Study recommendations focus on the city's most overlooked resource: the city's large network of Substantially Up Schools that operate almost entirely in anonymity.

**Summary:** [http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP\\_summ\\_090106.pdf](http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP_summ_090106.pdf)

**Full Report:** [http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP\\_rpt\\_092105.pdf](http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP_rpt_092105.pdf)

**Downey, D.B., Von Hippel, P.T., & Hughes, M. (2008).** Are “failing” schools really failing? Using seasonal comparison to evaluate school effectiveness. *Sociology of Education*, 81(3), 242–270.

**Abstract:** To many, it seems obvious which schools are failing—schools whose students perform poorly on achievement tests. But since evaluating schools on achievement mixes the effects of school and nonschool influences, achievement-based evaluation likely underestimates the effectiveness of schools that serve disadvantaged populations. In this article, the authors discuss school-evaluation methods that more effectively separate school effects from nonschool effects. Specifically, the authors evaluate schools using 12-month (calendar-year) learning rates, 9-month (school-year) learning rates, and a provocative new measure, “impact”—which is the difference between the school-year learning rate and the summer learning rate. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of 1998-99, the authors show that learning or impact-based evaluation methods substantially change conclusions about which schools are failing. In particular, among schools with failing (i.e., bottom-quintile) achievement levels, less than half are failing with respect to learning or impact. In addition, schools that serve disadvantaged students are much more likely to have low achievement levels than they are to have low levels of learning or impact. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to market-based educational reform.

**Duke, D.L., Tucker, P.D., Salmonowicz, M.J., Levy, M., & Saunders, S. (2007).** *Teachers’ guide to school turnarounds*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

**Abstract:** Most guides on the process of turning around low-performing schools typically are addressed to principals and superintendents. Teachers, however, are the individuals expected to conduct the “heavy lifting” of school improvement. *Teachers’ Guide to School Turnarounds* is the first book, on the subject written expressly for teachers. It provides a step-by-step introduction to the process of raising student achievement, beginning with diagnosing the causes of low performance and extending beyond the first year of improvement to the factors involved in sustaining high performance. Based on the authors’ experiences with the School Turnaround Specialist Program as well as a review of research on successful school improvement projects, the book contains a wealth of tips and warnings for those engaged in, or anticipating being engaged in, the process of turning around a low-performing school.

**Contents:** It Takes a Faculty to Turn around a School -- School Turnaround Is Not a Myth -- Why Are Some Schools Less Successful Than Other Schools? -- Inquiring into the Health of



Your School -- Planning: The First Step to Better School Performance -- The First Year of the School Turnaround Process -- Keys to Sustaining a Successful School Turnaround -- Those Who Can, Teach; Those Who Can Teach, Change -- Turnaround Resources -- Appendices: A-F -- About the Authors.

**Edmunds, J.A. (2008). Using alternative lenses to examine effective teachers' use of technology with low-performing students. *Teachers College Record*, 110(1), 195–217.**

**Abstract:** *Background:* Much of the literature on the use of technology with low-performing students can be seen as contradictory and limited, primarily because it examines technology use through a single lens: the technology itself. *Purpose:* This study used two lenses—teachers' instructional practices and the research on effective technology use—to examine the use of technology by effective teachers. *Population:* Short interviews were conducted with 20 teachers (in 13 elementary schools) nominated by their principals as effective at improving the achievement of their low-performing students and as considering technology an important part of their instruction. Three of those teachers were chosen for a more in-depth examination. *Research Design:* The study used a collective case study approach to examine the ways effective teachers used technology with their low-performing students. *Data Collection and Analysis:* Data sources included screening interviews with 20 teachers; extended interviews with three teachers chosen for the case study; five days of observations in three case-study classrooms; and interviews with seven students and their parents. Analysis used the constant comparative approach to develop themes that cut across the classrooms and interviews. *Findings:* The teachers in this study used technology in a balanced way that was continuous with their general instructional practices. Their use of technology reflected nine primary roles: to target instruction more effectively; to incorporate a variety of strategies; to support teacher-guided instruction; to increase student involvement in instruction; to facilitate remediation and reinforcement; to promote advanced thinking strategies; to increase access to resources; to motivate students; and to meet the needs of the whole child. *Conclusion:* Examining the use of technology in the context of teachers' instructional practices provides a fuller picture of the different roles technology can play to the learning of low-performing students.

**Finnigan, K.S., Bitter, C., & O'Day, J. (2009). Improving low-performing schools through external assistance: Lessons from Chicago and California. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 17(7), 1–27. [See also: Honig, 2009; Marsh et al., 2005; Newmann & Sconzert, 2000; Rowan, 2002; and Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004]**

**Abstract:** This article describes the design and implementation of external support to low-performing schools using data from Chicago and California. Using the literature on external

support, instructional capacity, and policy strength, the study gathered data from interviews, observations, document review, and surveys. The findings suggest that the model of assistance employed in both Chicago and California was inadequate to the task. While the policies examined demonstrate recognition that low-performing schools need additional capacity if they are to substantially improve student outcomes, external support providers used limited and haphazard approaches, and as a result, the support component had little influence on teaching and learning. In addition, because the external supports relied on a market-like support structure with few other mechanisms to ensure quality, and because there was limited quantity (intensity) of support, the benefit that external assistance might otherwise have provided was limited. This was particularly problematic for the lowest capacity schools, many of which experienced limited change despite increased educator effort and involvement of external providers. In essence, external assistance through these school accountability policies did little to improve educator and organizational performance.

**Link:** <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/viewFile/9/9>

**Finnigan, K.S., & Gross, B. (2007). Do accountability policy sanctions influence teacher motivation? Lessons from Chicago's low-performing schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 594–630.**

**Abstract:** The federal No Child Left Behind Act and previous performance-based accountability policies are based on a theoretical assumption that sanctions will motivate school staff to perform at higher levels and focus attention on student outcomes. Using data from Chicago, this article draws on expectancy and incentive theories to examine whether motivation levels changed as a result of accountability policies and the policy mechanisms that affected teacher motivation. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the authors found that the value teachers placed on their professional status and their goals for students focused and increased their effort, but low morale had the potential to undercut the sustainability of teachers' responses. [PDF included]

**Fleischman, S., & Heppen, J. (2009). Improving low-performing high schools: Searching for evidence of promise. *Future of Children*, 19(1), 105–133.**

**Abstract:** Noting that many of the nation's high schools are beset with major problems, such as low student reading and math achievement, high dropout rates, and an inadequate supply of effective teachers, Steve Fleischman and Jessica Heppen survey a range of strategies that educators have used to improve low-performing high schools. The authors begin by showing how the standards-based school reform movement, together with the No Child Left Behind Act requirement that underperforming schools adopt reforms supported by scientifically based

research, spurred policy makers, educators, and researchers to create and implement a variety of approaches to attain improvement. Fleischman and Heppen then review a number of widely adopted reform models that aim to change “business as usual” in low-performing high schools. The models include comprehensive school reform programs, dual enrollment and early college high schools, smaller learning communities, specialty (for example, career) academies, charter high schools, and education management organizations. In practice, say the authors, many of these improvement efforts overlap, defying neat distinctions. Often, reforms are combined to reinforce one another. The authors explain the theories that drive the reforms, review evidence of their reforms’ effectiveness to date, and suggest what it will take to make them work well. Although the reforms are promising, the authors say, few as yet have solid evidence of systematic or sustained success. In concluding, Fleischman and Heppen emphasize that the reasons for a high school’s poor performance are so complex that no one reform model or approach, no matter how powerful, can turn around low-performing schools. They also stress the need for educators to implement each reform program with fidelity to its requirements and to support it for the time required for success. Looking to the future, the authors suggest steps that decision makers, researchers, and sponsors of research can take to promote evidence-based progress in education.

**Foley, E., Mishook, J., Thompson, J., Kubiak, M., Supovitz, J., & Rhude-Faust, M.K. (2008). *Beyond test scores: Leading indicators for education*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.**

**Abstract:** “Leading indicators” in education—as in economics—can provide early signs of progress toward academic achievement and thus help district leaders and other stakeholders make informed decisions about efforts to improve student learning—before the test results come in. A new study by the Annenberg Institute, *Beyond Test Scores: Leading Indicators for Education*, looks at four districts—Chattanooga, Montgomery County (MD), Naperville (IL), and Philadelphia—that have developed leading indicators and seeks to expand the notion of these difficult-to-quantify but important measures, such as student engagement and central office practice.

**Link:** <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/LeadingIndicators.pdf>

**Graczewski, C., Knudson, J., & Holtzman, D.J. (2009). Instructional leadership in practice: What does it look like, and what influence does it have? *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 72–96.**

**Abstract:** Literature on school reform has emphasized the need for principals to expand beyond their traditionally administrative role and become instructional leaders. This article examines the relationship between the practice of site-based instructional leadership and the professional development that teachers received in the context of a district-wide reform effort in San Diego City Schools. Using data from teacher surveys and school-based interviews, we find a connection between aspects of principal instructional leadership (coherent school-wide vision and leaders' engagement in instructional improvement) and selected research-based characteristics of effective teacher professional development (coherence and focus on content and curriculum). We conclude by addressing some of the tensions and limitations associated with a particular vision for site-based instructional leadership. [PDF included]

**Gross, B., Booker, T.K., & Goldhaber, D. (2009). Boosting student achievement: The effect of comprehensive school reform on student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(2), 111–126.**

**Abstract:** Between the late 1980s and early 2000s, schools, districts, states, and the federal government devoted enormous resources to the implementation of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models. With more than 1.6 billion federal dollars distributed through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) project and its successor, the CSR project, states and districts made CSR adoption a central reform strategy for their lowest performing schools. Today, however, federal funding for CSR has dried up, and this policy has been left behind with few explicit efforts to assess the effect of these CSR funds on schools. In this article, the authors look back on this federal reform initiative and the effect it had on Texas students. Using promising analytic techniques for nonexperimental studies to investigate the effects of federal CSR awards on student achievement, the authors find that CSR funding did not significantly affect students' reading performance and that its effect on math performance varied across different student types.

**Hanson, M.R., & Moore, D.R. (2003). *Rachel Carson Elementary School: An exemplary urban school that teaches children to read*. Chicago: Designs for Change.**

**Abstract:** An in-depth research study that analyzes how Chicago's Carson Elementary School has achieved exceptional student achievement results—with a special emphasis on how Carson teaches children to read. Carson's 1,240 students are 99% low-income, and two-thirds of them speak little or no English when they enter school. Yet in spring 2003, 68% of Carson's eighth graders met or exceeded the national average on the Iowa Reading Test, and 73% did the same in math.

**Summary:** [http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/carson\\_summ.pdf](http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/carson_summ.pdf)

**Full Report:** <http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/Carsonsept03.pdf>

**Harr, J.J., Parrish, T., Socias, M., & Gubbins, P. (2007). *Evaluation study of California's High Priority Schools Grant Program: Final report*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.**

**Abstract:** Passed in 1999, the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) established a results-based accountability system in California with specific performance targets for schools. The PSAA created a system of rewards and sanctions for meeting or not meeting those targets, and established assistance programs for low-performing schools. In 2001, the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) was established as part of PSAA to provide additional funds to the lowest-performing schools in the state, taking the place of the prior Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). In 2005, the California Department of Education (CDE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to examine the implementation, impact, costs, and benefits of the HPSGP. The CDE identified four primary evaluation questions for the study: (1) How effectively did participating schools and districts implement the HPSGP?; (2) What has been the overall impact of participation in the HPSGP on school and district personnel, parents, and the community, and on school and district organization, policies, and practices? (3) What has been the impact from a school's participation in HPSGP on student performance? and (4) What unintended consequences have resulted from the implementation of the HPSGP? To address the study's research questions, AIR: (1) Analyzed extant data, including student- and school-level achievement data for HPSGP and non-HPSGP schools within California, HPSGP Annual Reports and expenditure reports for all HPSGP schools, and the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS); (2) Conducted case study visits to 16 HPSGP schools in nine districts; (3) Analyzed data from surveys in 106 HPSGP schools; and (4) Analyzed data from phone surveys in 49 districts. It was found that, on average, HPSGP schools showed gains in student performance during the period of program implementation. However, the effect of participating in the program on student performance was negligible. Detailed findings and recommendations are discussed.

**Report PDF:**

<http://www.air.org/publications/documents/Final%20Year%202%20HP%20Report.pdf>

**Technical Appendices:**

<http://www.air.org/publications/documents/Final%20Year%202%20HP%20Appendices.pdf>

**Hassel, E.A., & Hassel, B. C. (2009). The big u-turn: How to bring schools from the brink of failure to stellar success. *Education Next*, 9(1), 21–27.**

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Link:** [http://educationnext.org/files/ednext\\_20091\\_20.pdf](http://educationnext.org/files/ednext_20091_20.pdf)

**Haynes, M. (2009, June). *NASBE Policy Update: State strategies for turning around low-performing schools and districts*, 17(7). Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.**

**Abstract:** Despite decades of reform, states continue to struggle with how best to assist failing schools and districts. This policy update by the National Association of State Boards of Education offers ways for state education leaders to frame a coherent state response. The brief, which summarizes a conference on this topic in March 2009 hosted by NASBE and the Council of Chief State School Officers, includes a summary of a panel on recent turnaround efforts in Massachusetts and Maryland, moderated by Richard Laine, Wallace’s director of education programs.

**Link:**

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/State-Strategies-for-Turning-Around-Low-Performing-Schools.pdf>

**Hergert, L.F., Gleason, S.C., Urbano, C., & North, C. (2009). *How eight state education agencies in the Northeast and Islands Region identify and support low-performing schools and districts* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2009–No. 068). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands.**

**Abstract:** This report describes and analyzes how eight state education agencies in the Northeast and Islands Region—those of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, and Vermont—identify and support low-performing schools and districts under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Focusing on direct state supports and interventions, the report finds that the eight agencies have created supports and rationales to put federally defined accountability principles into practice in response to their specific contexts, local needs, and capacities.



**Report Summary PDF:**

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL\\_2009068\\_sum.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009068_sum.pdf)

**Report PDF:** [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL\\_2009068.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009068.pdf)

**Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.**

**Abstract:** This guide identifies practices that can improve the performance of chronically low-performing schools—a process commonly referred to as creating “turnaround schools.” The four recommendations in this guide work together to help failing schools make adequate yearly progress.

**Link:** [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround\\_pg\\_04181.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_pg_04181.pdf)

**Honig, M.I. (2009). “External” organizations and the politics of urban educational leadership: The case of new small autonomous schools initiatives. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 84(3), 394–413. [See also: Finnigan, Bitter, & O’Day, 2009; Marsh et al., 2005; Newmann & Sconzert, 2000; Rowan, 2002; and Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004]**

**Abstract:** Members of organizations traditionally outside public school systems have begun to take on central, and in some cases internal, leadership roles and responsibilities in the implementation of ambitious educational improvement initiatives. How are these arrangements playing out in practice? This article explores that question with a 3-year qualitative investigation of the participation of two such organizations—a school reform support organization and a consortium of foundations—in the implementation of new small autonomous schools initiatives in Oakland (California) and Chicago. Using Malen’s politics of implementation framework, this article reveals how external organizations influenced the implementation of district initiatives with significant consequences for both the reform strategy and their own ability to sustain their involvement in implementation over time. The article concludes with implications for the research and practice of educational leadership.

**Honig, M.I., & Hatch, T C. (2004). Crafting coherence: How schools strategically manage multiple, external demands. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 16–30. [See also Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001a, 2001b]**

**Abstract:** “Policy coherence” is an often cited but seldom achieved education policy goal. We argue that addressing this policy-practice gap requires a reconceptualization of coherence not as the objective alignment of external requirements but as a dynamic process. This article elaborates this re-conceptualization using theories of institutional and organizational change and empirical illustrations from literature on school reform and education policy implementation. We define coherence as a process, which involves schools and school district central offices working together to craft or continually negotiate the fit between external demands and schools’ own goals and strategies. Crafting coherence includes: schools setting school-wide goals and strategies that have particular features; schools using those goals and strategies to decide whether to bridge themselves to or buffer themselves from external demands; and school district central offices supporting these school-level processes. This definition suggests new directions for policy research and practice.

**Honig, M.I., Lorton, J.S., & Copland, M.A. (2009). Urban district central office transformation for teaching and learning improvement: Beyond a zero-sum game. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 108(1), 21–40.**

**Abstract:** Over the past 15 years, a growing number of midsized to large school district central offices have engaged in radical reforms to strengthen teaching and learning for all students districtwide. Such efforts mark a significant change in urban educational governance. The authors call these efforts “district central office transformation for teaching and learning improvement.” Local governance reforms of the past typically involved the reallocation of authority between central offices and schools in a zero-sum game. By contrast, central office transformation involves strengthening the authority and attendant capacity and professional practice of both central offices and schools to strengthen teaching and learning. Central office transformation rests in part on assumptions that districtwide teaching and learning improvement is a systems challenge—one that demands the full participation of people in schools, central offices, and their local communities. Unlike efforts to restructure central offices through realigning organizational charts and adding and dissolving subunits, central office transformation involves deep institutional shifts in the nature of central office administrators’ work and their relationships with schools. Particularly given the profound changes in local governance and local leadership capacity that these shifts represent, the authors view central office transformation as a major dimension of the new localism. What more specifically is central office transformation? What does the emergence of central office transformation efforts imply for a next generation of educational research? This essay takes up these issues with a review of research and recent

central office transformation efforts in midsized to large urban district central offices. In their research review, the authors highlight that an emerging wave of research on school central offices reveals the importance of remaking the daily work of central office administrators and how central office administrators relate to schools as fundamental to teaching and learning improvement. The review underscores the promise of central office transformation as a distinct educational improvement approach. The authors also elaborate on what central office transformation involves in practice, drawing on illustrations from relatively well-developed efforts currently under way in Atlanta Public Schools, New York City Public Schools, and Oakland Unified School District (CA). The authors conclude with implications of these developments for a next generation of research on educational governance.

**Huang, F.L., & Moon, T.R. (2009). Is experience the best teacher? A multilevel analysis of teacher characteristics and student achievement in low performing schools. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(3), 209–234.**

**Abstract:** The study investigated several teacher characteristics, with a focus on two measures of teaching experience, and their association with second grade student achievement gains in low-performing, high-poverty schools in a Mid-Atlantic state. Value-added models using three-level hierarchical linear modeling were used to analyze the data from 1,544 students, 154 teachers, and 53 schools. Results indicated that traditional teacher qualification characteristics such as licensing status and educational attainment were not statistically significant in producing student achievement gains. Total years of teaching experience was also not a significant predictor but a more specific measure, years of teaching experience at a particular grade level, was significantly associated with increased student reading achievement. We caution researchers and policymakers when interpreting results from studies that have used only a general measure of teacher experience as effects are possibly underestimated. Policy implications are discussed.

**Jacob, B.A., & Lefgren, L. (2009). The effect of grade retention on high school completion. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(3), 33–58. [See also *Designs for Change*, 2005]**

**Abstract:** Low-achieving students in many school districts are retained in a grade to allow them to gain the academic or social skills that teachers believe are necessary to succeed academically. In this paper, we use plausibly exogenous variation in retention generated by a test-based promotion policy to assess the causal impact of grade retention on high school completion. We find that retention among younger students does not affect the likelihood of high school completion, but that retaining low-achieving eighth grade students in elementary school substantially increases the probability that these students will drop out of high school.

**Jacob, B., & Ludwig, J. (2008). *Improving educational outcomes for poor children* (NBER Working Paper No. 14550). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.**

**Abstract:** This review paper, prepared for the forthcoming Russell Sage volume *Changing Poverty*, considers the ability of different education policies to improve the learning outcomes of low-income children in America. Disagreements on this question stem in part from different beliefs about the problems with our nation's public schools. In our view there is some empirical support for each of the general concerns that have been raised about public schools serving high-poverty student populations including: the need for more funding for those school inputs where additional spending is likely to pass a benefit-cost test; limited capacity of many schools to substantially improve student learning by improving the quality of instruction on their own; and the need for improved incentives for both teachers and students, and for additional operational flexibility. Evidence suggests that the most productive changes to existing education policies are likely to come from increased investments in early childhood education for poor children, improving the design of the federal No Child Left Behind accountability system, providing educators with incentives to adopt practices with a compelling research base while expanding efforts to develop and identify effective instructional regimes, and continued support and evaluation of a variety of public school choice options.

**Jacob, B., & Ludwig, J. (2009). *Improving educational outcomes for poor children*. In M. Cancian, & S. Danziger (Eds.), *Changing poverty, changing policies* (pp. 266–300). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.**

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Kannapel, P.J., & Clements, S.K. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.**

**Abstract:** High academic achievement by students in high-poverty schools is generally not the case in Kentucky or throughout the nation. But some schools do succeed at helping all their students achieve, regardless of their background or socioeconomic conditions. This study, conducted for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence with funding from the Ford Foundation, looks at a group of these high-poverty, high-performing schools in Kentucky to determine how they break the usual pattern of low achievement. It is hoped that the lessons from these exceptional schools will be helpful for other educators who face similar challenges.

**Link:** <http://www.cdl.org/resource-library/pdf/FordReportJE.pdf>

**Kim, J.J., & Crasco, L.M. (2006). Best policies and practices in urban educational reform: A summary of empirical analysis focusing on student achievement and equity. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 11(1), 19–37.**

**Abstract:** This article is a condensed report of a 3-year empirical study exploring best policies and practices of urban educational reform, focusing on 22 major urban school districts that were involved in the Urban Systemic Initiative (USI) program, sponsored by the National Science Foundation. USI has been a catalyst for large-scale educational reform in mathematics and science. The model was based on 6 educational reform drivers: 4 process drivers (standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; policy; resources; and broad-based support) and 2 student outcome drivers (student achievement and improvement of the historically underserved). Annual data from 21 USI sites were collected for up to 6 years (school years 1993–1994 to 1999–2000). Causal inferential models were explored among the process drivers (independent variables) and outcome drivers (dependent variables), linking policy implementation rubrics to quantitative student outcome data.

**King, M.B., & Newmann, F.M. (2001). Building school capacity through professional development: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(2), 86–93.**

**Abstract:** Situates current research on professional development within an organizational perspective. Offers a framework for the study of professional development and proposes that key factors that affect student achievement be conceptualized as school capacity. Argues that increases in school capacity will lead to gains in student achievement and that professional development should, therefore, be designed to enhance the following three dimensions of capacity. First, school capacity includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual staff members. Second, the diverse human and technical resources of a school need to be put to use in an organized, collective enterprise termed school professional community. Finally, a school's capacity is enhanced when its programs for student and staff learning are coherent, focused, and sustained. To illustrate comprehensive professional development that addresses all aspects of school capacity, describes one school from a current study. [PDF included]

**Kochanek, J.R. (2005). *Building trust for better schools: Research-based practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

**Abstract:** Kochanek links the growth of trust with positive outcomes that benefit schools such as increased participation, greater openness to innovations, boosts in parent outreach, and higher academic productivity.

**Contents:** Foreword, Anthony S. Bryk -- 1 Introduction: Making a case for trust -- 2 Trust building as a developmental process -- 3 MacNeil Elementary School: Improving a high-trust school -- 4 Mills Elementary School: Starting from a lack of trust -- 5 Cole Magnet Elementary School: Coming back to trust -- 6 An examination of trust building through quantitative analyses -- 7 Implementing trust-building strategies in your school -- Resource A: CCSR relational trust measures -- Resource B: Measures of key concepts of trust building.

**Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L.V. (2008). How large an effect can we expect from school reforms? *Teachers College Record*, 110(8), 1611–1638.**

**Abstract:** *Background/Context:* Determining the effectiveness of reform strategies is a major part of the current and future educational research agenda. Effects of education reforms will be evaluated largely quantitatively, and an important aspect of this work will be judging how well reform strategies work. The rhetoric of contemporary school reform suggests two somewhat different solutions to the problem of the interpretive frame. One solution is derived from the idea that the goal of school reform is to reduce the achievement gaps between minority groups such as Blacks or Hispanics and Whites, rich and poor, and males and females. The second solution is derived from a similar idea that school reforms are intended to reduce the achievement gap between lower and higher achieving schools. *Purpose:* The purpose of this paper is to explore these two alternative frameworks for interpreting the effects of school reforms and to gain insight about the implications of each of the frameworks for interpreting these effects. *Research Design:* We use NAEP trend data and examine empirical evidence about the implications of these two frameworks for judging the effects of school reforms. Our study is correlational and uses observational data from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. *Findings:* We find that these two frameworks lead to different judgments about whether the effects of reforms are large enough to be important. We argue that the normative distribution of school effects framework is more appropriate than the other framework for interpreting the likely magnitude of school reform effects. In addition, we show that interpreting the magnitude of the effects of school reforms in terms of individual variation and the achievement gaps between important student groups may not only be disappointing, but also misleading. *Conclusions/Recommendations:* The results of this study can be used to provide a way to obtain plausible reform effects for designing studies of school reform. The results of this study can also provide a context in which to evaluate the results of studies of the effectiveness of school reform in terms of national data. Our study also illustrates one way in which survey data can contribute to evidence-based policy formation. The distribution of the observed school effects provides a basis for estimating plausible effect



magnitudes for planning intervention studies. The analyses of school effects can also provide a context for interpreting treatment effects within the context of the observed variation. It permits the policy researcher to explain the implications of reform effects within the backdrop of observed variation within which any intervention will operate.

**Kowal, J., Hassel, E.A., & Hassel, B.C. (2009). *Successful school turnarounds: Seven steps for district leaders* (Issue Brief). Washington, DC: Learning Point Associates, the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.**

**Abstract:** This brief, by Julie Kowal, Emily Ayscue Hassel, and Bryan C. Hassel, draws from the cross-sector research base on successful turnarounds to offer seven steps for district leaders to support turnaround principals and maximize their chances of success.

**Link:** <http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefSept09.pdf>

**Kowal, J.P., Rosch, J.L., Hassel, E.A., & Hassel, B.C. (2009). *Performance-based dismissals: Cross-sector lessons for school turnarounds*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.**

**Abstract:** Not provided.

**Link:** [http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Performance-Based\\_Dismissals.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Performance-Based_Dismissals.pdf)

**Lee, J. (2008). Is test-driven external accountability effective? Synthesizing the evidence from cross-state causal-comparative and correlational studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 608–644.**

**Abstract:** In the midst of keen controversies on the impact of high-stakes testing and test-driven external accountability policy, the more balanced and careful selection, interpretation, and use of scientific research evidence are crucial. This article offers a critical synthesis of cross-state causal-comparative and correlational studies that explored the effects of test-driven external accountability policies on reading and math achievement. A meta-analysis of 76 effect-size estimates from 14 selected studies showed a modestly positive effect on average but no significant effect on the racial achievement gap. Nevertheless, this review calls for further evidence on the policy-outcome linkage, revealing limitations, uncertainties, and inconsistencies in many findings. The author explores variations among the studies in terms of independent and dependent variables, analytical samples and methods, and the reporting of statistical and practical

significance. Implications for accountability policy and research under the No Child Left Behind Act are discussed. [PDF included]

**Lee, V.E., & Ready, D.D. (2009). U.S. high school curriculum: Three phases of contemporary research and reform. *Future of Children*, 19(1), 135–156.**

**Abstract:** Valerie Lee and Douglas Ready explore the influences of the high school curriculum on student learning and the equitable distribution of that learning by race and socioeconomic status. They begin by tracing the historical development of the U.S. comprehensive high school and then examine the curricular reforms of the past three decades. During the first half of the twentieth century, the authors say, public high schools typically organized students into rigid curricular “tracks” based largely on students’ past academic performance and future occupational and educational plans. During the middle of the century, however, high schools began to provide students with a choice among courses that varied in both content and academic rigor. Although the standards movement of the 1980s limited these curricular options somewhat, comprehensive curricula remained, with minority and low-income students less often completing college-prep courses. During the 1990s, say the authors, researchers who examined the associations between coursetaking and student learning reported that students completing more advanced coursework learned more, regardless of their social or academic backgrounds. Based largely on this emerging research consensus favoring college-prep curriculum, in 1997 public high schools in Chicago began offering exclusively college-prep courses. To address the needs of the city’s many low-performing ninth graders, schools added extra coursework in subjects in which their performance was deficient. A recent study of this reform, however, found that these approaches made little difference in student achievement. Lee and Ready hypothesize that “selection bias” may explain the divergent conclusions reached by the Chicago study and previous research. Earlier studies rarely considered the unmeasured characteristics of students who completed college-prep courses—characteristics such as motivation, access to academic supports, and better teachers—that are also positively related to student learning. Although the Chicago evaluation is only one study of one city, its findings raise the worrisome possibility that the recent push for “college-prep for all” may not generate the improvements for which researchers and policymakers had hoped.

**Lee, V.E., & Smith, J.B. (1999). Social support and achievement for young adolescents in Chicago: The role of school academic press. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 907–945.**

**Abstract:** This study explores whether the social support that young adolescents may draw on for their academic activities is related to how much they learn in mathematics and reading over

the course of a year. Data came from 1997 survey reports collected by the Consortium for Chicago School Research from 30,000 sixth and eighth graders in 304 Chicago public elementary schools about the support these students receive from their teachers, their parents, their peers, and their neighborhoods and from annual standardized tests conducted by the Chicago Public Schools. Using hierarchical linear modeling methods, we found that, on average, social support is positively but modestly related to learning. However, both learning and the relationship between social support and learning are contingent on the academic press of the school students attend. Findings are discussed within the context of school reform policies focusing on increasing social support. [PDF included]

**Lee, V.E., Smith, J.B., Perry, T.E., & Smylie, M.A. (1999). *Social support, academic press, and student achievement: A view from the middle grades in Chicago*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.**

**Abstract:** This report from the Chicago Annenberg Research Project focuses on the relationships of student social support and school academic press to gains in student achievement. Analyses of citywide survey data and achievement test scores of sixth and eighth grade students in Chicago reveal that students learn most when they experience both strong academic press in their schools and strong social support from people in and out of their schools. By contrast, if one of these conditions is strong and the other is weak, students learn less, and if both are weak, their academic achievement is comparatively small. The report pairs these findings with examples from fieldwork that illustrate steps schools can take to strengthen both social support and academic press to promote student learning. This report challenges “either-or” proposals for school reform that view academic rigor and social support for students as contradictory strategies. Instead, it argues that student social support and school academic press are complementary strategies that work best in tandem.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0e01.pdf>

**Le Floch, K.C., Boyle, A., & Therriault, S.B. (2008). *Help wanted: State capacity for school improvement* (AIR Research Brief). Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.**

**Abstract:** This research brief reports on findings from an on-line survey conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to study state education agency capacity to develop and deploy a statewide system of support for schools identified for improvement under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). To provide support commensurate with the challenges facing low-performing schools, state education agencies need adequate capacity—including infrastructure, professional resources, and political support. Data from a survey of state officials in all 50 states reveal that:

(1) State officials report limited capacity to support school improvement: only 16 states reported “moderate” capacity while 33 reported limited capacity; (2) Respondents in states with more challenging workloads perceived lower levels of capacity; and (3) State officials generally perceive expertise within the state education agency to be a strength, although they report lower levels of expertise regarding the needs of English language learners. In summary, state officials perceive constraints associated with their own capacity to provide support to low-performing schools, particularly with regard to staff, funding, and technology.

**Link:** <http://www.air.org/publications/documents/Research%20Brief%20I-State%20Capacity%20for%20School%20Improvement%20091508%20r1.pdf>

**Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2009). Review of empirical evidence about school size effects: A policy perspective. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 464–490.**

**Abstract:** This review examined 57 post-1990 empirical studies of school size effects on a variety of student and organizational outcomes. The weight of evidence provided by this research clearly favors smaller schools. Students who traditionally struggle at school and students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds are the major benefactors of smaller schools. Elementary schools with large proportions of such students should be limited in size to not more than about 300 students; those serving economically and socially heterogeneous or relatively advantaged students should be limited in size to about 500 students. Secondary schools serving exclusively or largely diverse and/or disadvantaged students should be limited in size to about 600 students or fewer, while those secondary schools serving economically and socially heterogeneous or relatively advantaged students should be limited in size to about 1,000 students.

**Lleras, C. (2008). Race, racial concentration, and the dynamics of educational inequality across urban and suburban schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), 886–912.**

**Abstract:** This study uses national data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study to model educational inequality as a feedback process among course placement, student engagement, and academic achievement, separately for students in schools with high and low percentages of African American students. Results find strong effects of placement, engagement, and performance on one another over time and across both school types. However, the results also show that racial segregation is detrimental to the overall learning process for students between 8th and 10th grade. The author concludes that White and African American students in

predominantly Black, particularly urban, schools are significantly disadvantaged at each point of the learning process compared to students in other school types.

**Louis, K.S. (2005). *Organizing for school change*. New York: Routledge.**

**Abstract:** Improving education is a key priority for governments around the world. While many suggestions on how best to achieve this are currently under debate, years of academic research have already revealed more about how to encourage change than is sometimes assumed. This volume brings together for the first time some of the most significant work of Karen Seashore Louis, one of the foremost thinkers and researchers in the field. *Organizing for School Change* presents a unique variety of research-based results from studies conducted over the past twenty-five years. What emerges is not an idealistic plan, but a realistic picture of what needs to be done if schools are to be made better. Drawing on a wide and comprehensive list of sources, the ideas brought together in this collection will prove invaluable and insightful reading, stimulating both newcomers and veterans of the field to consider educational research in new ways.

**Contents:** Foreword, Andy Hargreaves and Kathryn Riley -- Part 1. The Process of Change and Innovation -- 1. Knowledge Use and School Improvement -- 2. Permanent Innovations: Theoretical and administrative issues in institutionalizing change -- 3. Planning Improvement Efforts -- 4. Reforming Schools: Does the myth of Sisyphus apply? -- 5. Beyond 'Managed Change': Rethinking how schools improve -- 6. Organizational Learning and High Performance Learning Communities -- Part 2. Teachers in Changing Schools -- 7. Cultivating Teacher Engagement: Breaking the iron law of social class -- 8. Effects of Teacher Quality of Work Life on Commitment and Sense of Efficacy -- 9. Does Professional Community Affect the Classroom? Teacher' work and student work in restructuring schools -- 10. The Problem of Reform in Urban High Schools: A tale of two teams -- Part 3. Organizational Perspectives on Innovation and Change -- 11. Adoption Revisited: Decision-making and school district policy -- 12. Creating Community in Reform: Images of organizational learning in urban schools -- 13. A Culture Framework for Education: Defining quality values for U.S. high schools -- 14. Organizational Culture and Change: The impact of mental models, professional community, and interdisciplinary teaming on teacher practice -- Part 4. Educational Knowledge in Action -- 15. Policy Research in a Policy Vacuum -- 16. Improving Urban and Disadvantaged Schools: Dissemination and utilization perspectives -- 17. Reconnecting Knowledge Utilization and School Improvement: Two steps forward, one step back.

**Marsh, J.A., Kerr, K.A., Ikemoto, G.S., Darilek, H., Suttorp, M., Zimmer, R.W., & Barney, H. (2005). *The role of districts in fostering instructional improvement: Lessons from three urban districts partnered with the Institute for Learning* (RAND Research Brief). Santa**

**Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.** [See also: Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009; Honig, 2009; Newmman & Sconzert, 2000; Rowan, 2002; and Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004]

**Abstract:** Improving school systems is critical to bridging the achievement gap and achieving federal accountability goals. Research in three urban districts partnered with a university-based intermediary organization sheds light on promising instructional reform strategies and challenges to bringing about systemwide change. Analyses of district efforts to promote the instructional leadership of principals, support teacher learning through school-based coaches, specify curriculum, and promote data-based decisionmaking identify common factors constraining and enabling instructional improvement. The research also shows that third-party organizations can help facilitate policy alignment and build the capacity of district staff to lead instructional change.

**Link:** [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/2005/RAND\\_RB9142.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/2005/RAND_RB9142.pdf)

**Mazzeo, C., & Berman, I. (2003). *Reaching new heights: Turning around low-performing schools - A guide for governors*. Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.**

**Abstract:** For more than a decade, governors have been calling for an end to academically deficient schools and the elimination of the achievement gap. With gubernatorial leadership, states have devised and implemented accountability systems to identify, prioritize, and assist schools that need improvement. These efforts have shown some initial success, but states continue to refine their school improvement programs to increase their effectiveness.

**Link:** <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0803REACHING.pdf>

**McFadden, L. (2009). Miami's "Zone" teaches lessons about low-performing schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(8), 557–562.**

**Abstract:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools invested in an intensive, three-year program to improve the learning of students in its 39 lowest-performing schools. Known as the Zone, these schools experienced mixed success, with elementary schools reducing the gap between various groups of students while middle and high schools were less successful. However, the system learned a great deal from the experience, especially the value of targeting assistance to the neediest areas as a way to influence the whole system.



**Meehan, M.L., & Cowley, K.S. (2003). *A study of low-performing schools, high-performing schools, and high-performing learning communities*. Paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education, Waikiki, HI. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED475495)**

**Abstract:** Targets of educational reform in the United States have included classroom teachers, students, and school structure. Increasingly, nonstructural aspects of schooling are being examined as avenues to educational improvement. The purpose of this study was to investigate differences among professional staff members' perceptions of being in a continuous mode of learning and improvement in low- and high-performing schools and in high-performing learning communities. Data were collected and analyzed from questionnaires sent to the faculty members of 45 low-performing schools in Alabama and 48 high-performing schools in Kentucky. Results show that in low-performing schools across both states, professional staff members identify the area of school/family/community connections as being most in need of learning and improvement, and that high-performing schools are not necessarily high-performing learning communities. Because staff members in high-performing schools always scored higher in questionnaire scaled responses than staff members in low-performing schools, it is concluded that measuring a faculty's commitment to continuous learning and improvement is one effective way to assess the reculturing of a school's professional staff. Recommendations include repeating this study with schools in other states and doing longitudinal studies, among other designs.

**Link:**

[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/1a/f7/c0.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/f7/c0.pdf)

**Mintrop, H., & Trujillo, T. (2007a). *School improvement under test-driven accountability: A comparison of high- and low-performing middle schools in California* (CSE Report 717). Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).**

**Abstract:** Based on in-depth data from nine demographically similar schools, the study asks five questions in regard to key aspects of the improvement process and that speak to the consequential validity of accountability indicators: Do schools that differ widely according to system performance criteria also differ on the quality of the educational experience they provide to students? Are schools that have posted high growth on the state's performance index more effective organizationally? Do high-performing schools respond more productively to the messages of their state accountability system? Do high- and low-performing schools exhibit different approaches to organizational learning and teacher professionalism? Is district

instructional management in an aligned state accountability system related to performance? We report our findings in three results papers (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2007a, 2007b; Trujillo & Mintrop, 2007) and this technical report. The results papers, in a nutshell, show that, across the nine case study schools, one positive performance outlier differed indeed in the quality of teaching, organizational effectiveness, response to accountability, and patterns of organizational learning. Across the other eight schools, however, the patterns blurred. We conclude that, save for performance differences on the extreme positive and negative margins, relationships between system-designated performance levels and improvement processes on the ground are uncertain and far from solid. The papers try to elucidate why this may be so. This final technical report summarizes the major components of the study design and methodology, including case selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data-analysis techniques. We describe the context of the study as well as descriptive data on our cases and procedures.

**Link:** <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/R717.pdf>

**Mintrop, H., & Trujillo, T. (2007b). The practical relevance of accountability systems for school improvement: A descriptive analysis of California schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 29(4), 319–352.**

**Abstract:** In search for the practical relevance of accountability systems for school improvement, the authors ask whether practitioners traveling between the worlds of system-designated high- and low-performing schools would detect tangible differences in educational quality and organizational effectiveness. In comparing nine exceptionally high and low performing California middle schools, the authors conclude that if such travelers expected to encounter visible signs of an overall higher quality of students' educational experience at the high-performing schools, they would be disappointed. Rather, they would have to settle on a narrower definition of quality that is more proximate to the effective acquisition of standards-aligned and test-relevant knowledge. High-growth schools tended to generate internal commitment for accountability and consider it an impetus for raising standards.

**Murnane, R. (2008). *Educating urban children* (NBER Working Paper No. 13791). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.**

**Abstract:** For a variety of reasons described in the paper, improving the performance of urban school districts is more difficult today than it was several decades ago. Yet economic and social changes make performance improvement especially important today. Two quite different bodies of research provide ideas for improving the performance of urban school districts. One group of studies, conducted primarily by scholars of organizational design, examines the effectiveness of

particular district management strategies. The second, conducted primarily by economists, focuses on the need to improve incentives. Each body of research offers important insights. Each is somewhat insensitive to the importance of the insights offered by the other literature. A theme of this paper is that insights from both literatures are critical to improving urban school systems.

**Link:** <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2790/papers/w13791.pdf>

**Murphy, J., & Meyers, C.V. (2008). *Turning around failing schools: Leadership lessons from the organizational sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press; National Staff Development Council; American Association of School Administrators.**

**Abstract:** Provides an in-depth examination of the causes and symptoms of degeneration and a two-part model for preventing educational collapse and crafting an effective turnaround.

**Contents:** Preface -- About the Authors -- Part I: An Introduction -- Ch. 1 - A Framework for Understanding Turnaround -- Part II: Decline and Failure -- Ch. 2 - Symptoms of Decline -- Ch. 3 - Causes of Organizational Failure -- Ch. 4 - Crisis, Consequences, and Dysfunctional Reactions -- Ch. 5 - Context and Analytic Frames for Turnarounds -- Part III: Retrenchment -- Ch. 6 - Getting the Right Leadership -- Ch. 7 - Diagnosing the Situation and Taking Emergency Action -- Part IV: Recovery -- Ch. 8 - Pathways to Recovery: Operational Vision, Efficiencies, and Organizational Processes -- Ch. 9 - Organizational Work Ethic and Products -- Part V: Understanding Turnarounds in Schools -- Ch. 10 - Turning Around Failing Schools: The Landscape -- Ch. 11 - Turning Around Failing Schools: The Evidence -- References -- Index.

**National Governor's Association (2009). *Perfecting the formula: Effective strategies = Educational success. A briefing prepared for the 2009 Governors Education Symposium (June 14–15, 2009)*. Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices.**

**Abstract:** This briefing serves as a companion piece to sessions held at the 2009 Governors Education Symposium. It is divided into four issue briefs: (1) Standards and Assessments by Ilene Berman, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices; (2) Teacher Effectiveness by Sandi Jacobs, National Council on Teacher Quality; (3) Supporting Low-Performing Schools by Andy Calkins, Stupski Foundation; and (4) State Longitudinal Data Systems by Aimee Guidera, Data Quality Campaign.

**Link:** <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0906GESBRIEFS.PDF>

**Neal, D., & Schanzenbach, D.W. (2007). *Left behind by design: Proficiency counts and test-based accountability* (NBER Working Paper No. 13293). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.**

**Abstract:** Many test-based accountability systems, including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), place great weight on the numbers of students who score at or above specified proficiency levels in various subjects. Accountability systems based on these metrics often provide incentives for teachers and principals to target children near current proficiency levels for extra attention, but these same systems provide weak incentives to devote extra attention to students who are clearly proficient already or who have little chance of becoming proficient in the near term. We show, based on fifth grade test scores from the Chicago Public Schools, that both the introduction of NCLB in 2002 and the introduction of similar district level reforms in 1996 generated noteworthy increases in reading and math scores among students in the middle of the achievement distribution. Nonetheless, the least academically advantaged students in Chicago did not score higher in math or reading following the introduction of accountability, and we find only mixed evidence of score gains among the most advantaged students. A large existing literature argues that accountability systems built around standardized tests greatly affect the amount of time that teachers devote to different topics. Our results for fifth graders in Chicago, as well as related results for sixth graders after the 1996 reform, suggest that the choice of the proficiency standard in such accountability systems determines the amount of time that teachers devote to students of different ability levels.

**Newmann, F.M. (1993). *Beyond common sense in educational restructuring: The issues of content and linkage*. *Educational Researcher*, 22(2), 4–13, 22.**

**Abstract:** Common sense proposals for restructuring schools suggest promising directions, but in order for this potential to be fulfilled, two major issues must be addressed: What content is needed to give educational direction to the structures, and how can the many factors that influence this content be linked? This article proposes an agenda of content for teacher commitment and competence, and it identifies four problems of systemic linkage that restructuring “theory” has yet to address. Solutions to each of these issues will require resolution of persisting conflict over education goals.

**Newmann, F.M., & Associates (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**

**Abstract:** This book presents the findings of a five-year, federally funded study that examined the connection between school restructuring and student achievement. Using a wealth of examples, the authors provide a vivid picture of the conditions under which innovations in a school's organization contribute to achievement. They recommend standards for reaching student intellectual quality and offer evidence of how these standards work.

**Contents:** Introduction: The School Restructuring Study / Fred M. Newmann -- 1. Standards for Authentic Achievement and Pedagogy / Gary G. Wehlage, Fred M. Newmann and Walter G. Secada -- 2. Does Authentic Pedagogy Increase Student Achievement? / Helen M. Marks, Fred M. Newmann and Adam Gamoran -- 3. Careen and Lamar Elementary Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 4. Red Lake and Okanagon Middle Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 5. Cibola and Island High Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 6. Intellectual Quality / Fred M. Newmann, M. Bruce King and Walter G. Secada -- 7. Schoolwide Professional Community / Karen Seashore Louis, Sharon D. Kruse and Helen M. Marks -- 8. Support for Student Achievement / Helen M. Marks, Kenneth B. Doane and Walter G. Secada -- 9. Pathways to Equity / Walter G. Secada, Adam Gamoran and Matthew G. Weinstein -- 10. Participatory Decision Making / M. Bruce King, Karen Seashore Louis, Helen M. Marks and Kent D. Peterson -- 11. Support from External Agencies / Gary G. Wehlage, Eric Osthoff and Andrew C. Porter -- Conclusion: Restructuring for Authentic Student Achievement / Fred M. Newmann and Gary G. Wehlage -- App. A. Design of the School Restructuring Study -- App. B. Features of the SRS Schools -- App. C. SRS Researchers, Support Staff, and National Advisory Panel.

**Newmann, F.M., King, M.B., & Rigdon, M. (1997). Accountability and school performance: Implications from restructuring schools. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(1), 41–74.**

**Abstract:** Many politicians and policymakers today link school accountability and school performance. Drawing on evidence from the corporate world, they assume that strong external accountability will impel schools to improve student achievement. In this article, however, Fred Newmann, M. Bruce King, and Mark Rigdon argue that three issues keep this popular theory from working in practice: a) implementation controversies around standards, incentives, and constituencies; b) insufficient efforts to organize the human, technical, and social resources of a school into an effective collective enterprise— what the authors term “organizational capacity”—and c) failure to recognize the importance of internal school accountability. In a study of twenty-four restructuring schools, the authors found that strong accountability was rare; that organizational capacity was not related to accountability; that schools with strong external accountability tended to have low organizational capacity; and the strong internal accountability tended to reinforce a school's organizational capacity. Although the implications of this study for both accountability policy and, more broadly, school restructuring efforts may appear

disconcerting, the authors conclude with several practical guidelines to stimulate the kind of internal accountability that they found to be related to enhanced school performance.

**Newmann, F.M., & Sconzert, K. (2000). *School improvement with external partners.***

**Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.** [See also: Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009; Honig, 2009; Marsh et al., 2005; Rowan, 2002; and Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004]

**Abstract:** The Chicago Annenberg Challenge was formed in 1995 as part of the national Annenberg Challenge, a project aimed at improving public schools across the United States. Since its beginnings, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge has pursued school reform through intermediary organizations—community- or university-based external partners—linked to networks of schools. This report presents the findings of a study of nine Chicago Annenberg External Partners, their accomplishments, strategies, and the difficulties they face. In addition, this report discusses the implications of these findings for the ongoing work of external partners and organizations that support them.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0c01.pdf>

**Newmann, F.M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A.S. (2001a). *School instructional program coherence: Benefits and challenges.* Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.** [See also: Honig & Hatch, 2004; and Newmann, Smith Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001b]

**Abstract:** This report is one of a series of special topic reports developed by the Chicago Annenberg Research Project. It discusses an important reason why schools involved in multiple improvement initiatives do not always improve their students' achievements. It introduces the concept of instructional program coherence and presents new evidence that students in Chicago elementary schools with stronger program coherence show higher gains in student achievement. The report suggests ways in which school leaders, school improvement partners, and policymakers can act to bring about the instructional coherence that will reward their school-improvement efforts.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0d02.pdf>

**Newmann, F.M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A.S. (2001b). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational***



*Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(4), 297-321. [See also: Honig & Hatch, 2004; and Newmann, Smith Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001a]

**Abstract:** We present the concept of instructional program coherence and explain why school improvement frameworks that incorporate instructional program coherence are more likely to advance student achievement than multiple, unrelated efforts. We present evidence that Chicago elementary schools with stronger instructional program coherence make higher gains in student achievement. We also share observations on how, in specific schools, principals and external partners directed key school resources toward the development of instructional program coherence. In closing, we discuss factors within the educational system that discourage instructional program coherence and suggest ways that school leaders, school improvement partners, and policymakers can support greater instructional program coherence.

**O'Day, J., & Quick, H.E. (2009). Assessing instructional reform in San Diego: A theory-based approach. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 1–16.**

**Abstract:** This article provides an overview of the approach, methodology, and key findings from a theory-based evaluation of the district-led instructional reform effort in San Diego City Schools, under the leadership of Alan Bersin and Anthony Alvarado, that began in 1998. Beginning with an analysis of the achievement trends in San Diego relative to other California urban districts during this period, we then examine the theory of action that guided the San Diego effort, including the focus on instructional change as the primary means to improve student achievement and on the role of site-based instructional leadership and teacher professional development as central strategies for moving instructional practice. The article outlines the study design and introduces the set of papers in this special issue of *JESPAR*. Reviewing key findings and themes across the article, we conclude that although the reform demonstrated that instructional improvement at scale is possible, sustaining that reform may be more elusive. [PDF included]

**Odden, A., Borman, G., & Fermanich, M. (2004). Assessing teacher, classroom, and school effects, including fiscal effects. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 79(4), 4–32.**

**Abstract:** In this article, we argue that too much previous research has tended to assess the effects of student, classroom, and school variables in isolation from other variables and has often used statistical techniques that ignored the nested nature of the 3 classes of factors. We then argue that a more educationally oriented framework should be used to assess the effects of various student, classroom/teacher, and school variables on student learning, particularly student learning gains, and we identify several variables within each class of factors that research so far

has identified. In the article, we suggest some standard hierarchical linear modeling models that could be used to conduct analyses that do account for the nested nature of all variables. [PDF included]

**Orr, M.T., Berg, B., Shore, R., & Meier, E. (2008). Putting the pieces together: Leadership for change in low-performing urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(6), 670–693.**

**Abstract:** This article presents a collaborative inquiry analysis of the school-improvement experiences of four persistently low-performing schools. It draws on the experiences of three members of the Laboratory for the Design and Redesign of Schools (LDRS) consortium who helped during their planning for restructuring or restructuring phases and one regional official who oversaw their grant support and school-improvement interventions. The authors explore the role of organizational change to improved teaching and learning in the schools. The schools' mixed leadership and organizational capacity and belief in their teaching efficacy limited the benefits of state, district, and regional supports and resources, which school leaders were ill-equipped to coordinate. Combining leadership and organizational development with curricular and instructional reform models would be more promising.

**Pérez, M., Anand, P., Speroni, C., Parrish, T., Esra, P., Socías, M., & Gubbins, P. (2007). *Successful California schools in the context of educational adequacy*. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research. [See also Pérez & Socías, 2008]**

**Abstract:** [Taken from the Executive Summary]: This report presents the results from a seven-month study of successful schools in California performed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This study is part of a larger group of studies coordinated through Stanford University and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. The study explored some of the concepts underlying the “successful schools” approach to defining education adequacy and considered their implications for analyzing educational adequacy in California. The overall purpose of the paper is summarized in the following research questions:

- How has the successful schools approach been used to consider educational adequacy?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these alternative applications?
- How might successful schools be identified in the state?
- What resource differences are observed or reported by these schools?
- Can we predict academic performance by levels of resources and types of students enrolled?

- Is there any evidence that successful schools use their resources more efficiently?
- What other factors appear related to their success?
- What are the implications of these findings for defining education adequacy in California?

The successful schools approach seeks to determine the cost of the education needed to reach a specified level of educational outcomes by identifying districts achieving these outcomes and determining how much they are spending. This study sought to improve on this basic approach by selecting schools that have been consistently performing at a higher level than the one predicted by their demographics, rather than selecting successful schools that are above an absolute level of performance in a given year or over a given period of time. We analyzed these schools that were “beating the odds” (BTO) with regard to student achievement and compared them to low-performing (LP) schools—schools that had been performing at a lower level than predicted by their demographics. We also conducted telephone interviews with a total of 23 schools from both groups in an attempt to understand their resource allocation practices and to identify common themes in the factors principals deemed necessary for success... In short, what we have found is that the answer to success across the BTO schools in this study is complex. It is not simply more resources or the application of a certain recipe in regard to resource allocation practices. However, what we found in this analysis is not new. Our findings are similar in many ways to those of other research that have investigated the differences between relatively successful and unsuccessful schools. And although the linkage between the existence of high-quality teachers and school success seems somewhat obvious, the findings Successful California Schools in the Context of Educational Adequacy American Institutes for Research Page vii from this report suggest that such staff can be attracted to schools with high concentrations of students with special needs (e.g., students in poverty and English learners). To attract them we need to create an environment in which they believe they have a chance to be successful. Some resource considerations in relation to this may be stable leadership, district support, and discretion at the local level in regard to being able to attract and retain other high-quality teachers and to remove those who prove to be ineffective. From an overall adequacy perspective, our findings seem to challenge the basic underlying premise that the primary element that is lacking in regard to realizing state outcome goals is directly related to the quantities (or even to the attributes) of educational resources. It may be that simply adding more resources will be unlikely to make a difference in regard to school performance. This would suggest a somewhat different conceptualization of the adequacy question than has been commonly employed. Undoubtedly, there are certain minimum levels of resources that are imperative for school success. Beyond this, however, we may need to broaden this perspective to begin specifying adequate conditions for schools’ success. To examine this further, we may need resource measures that, at least in California, we do not currently have. For example, we do not have measures of the stability of leadership and instructional staff at the school. We do not know the degree to which there is latitude for schools to select, retain, and remove teachers as needed to ensure a “quality” staff.

We have insufficient measures to ensure district support for high needs schools—e.g., ensuring that they have at least equal resources in comparison to all schools in the district. In summary, identifying and analyzing BTO schools has provided insight into our overall conceptualization of educational adequacy. The basic underlying premise for adequacy as it has been largely defined and applied is that we simply need a better understanding of the levels of resources needed to reach a specified educational outcome standard. The analyses in this report suggest that at least for the pool of schools realizing this level of success at a much greater rate than their counterparts, traditional resource measures do not seem to be what are making the difference. This does not lead to the conclusion that resources do not matter. All of these schools do have resources at a certain specified level; none would likely say that they could continue to perform at this level with less, and most would probably argue for more. Perhaps existing adequacy frameworks would benefit from considering more broadly the mix of school-wide staff attributes, as well as counts of staff and non-personnel resources, needed in a school to be truly adequate for success. The state can further this agenda through more comprehensive data collection in regard to the broader sets of attributes and performance measures that are needed to better understand the full resource implications of schools' success.

**Link:** <http://www.air.org/publications/documents/Successful%20California%20Schools.pdf>

**Pérez, M., & Socías, M. (2008). Highly successful schools: What do they do differently and at what cost? *Education Finance and Policy*, 3(1), 109–129. [See also Perez et al., 2007]**

**Abstract:** An underlying premise of many resource adequacy studies is that reaching a specified set of educational outcomes is directly dependent on the level of resources. This article analyzes resource allocation practices among successful schools, low-performing schools, and average public schools in California. We find that differences in traditional resource measures are not able to explain the sharp differences in student achievement among these schools. While unmeasured differences in student characteristics in these schools may explain part of the difference in achievement, the schools also differ dramatically in their effectiveness even though they have very similar expenditure levels. The conclusion is not that resources do not matter. They do, but only when used wisely. This article also delves into what successful schools are doing that might explain their success.

**Peterson, P.E., & Chingos, M.M. (2009a). *Impact of for-profit and nonprofit management on student achievement: The Philadelphia intervention, 2002–2008* (Working Paper Series PEPG 09-02). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance.**

**Abstract:** At the request of the State of Pennsylvania, the School District of Philadelphia, in the summer of 2002, asked three for-profit firms to assume responsibility for 30 of its lowest-performing schools and it asked four nonprofit managers to assume the management of 16 other low-performing schools. A difference-in-differences analysis is used to estimate the impact of nonprofit and for-profit management on individual student achievement. Gains in test scores at the treated schools are estimated by comparing them with gains in other low-performing schools in the district. Students at schools under for-profit management outperformed those at schools under nonprofit management in all six years in both reading and math. Most estimations are statistically significant. Impacts of for-profit management relative to district management were positive in math, but no reading impacts could be detected. At nonprofits, students appear to have learned substantially less, especially in math, at nonprofit schools, than had their school remained under regular district management. However, impacts fell short of statistical significance.

**Link:** [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG09-02\\_Peterson\\_Chingos.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG09-02_Peterson_Chingos.pdf)

**Peterson, P.E., & Chingos, M.M. (2009b). For-profit and nonprofit management in Philadelphia schools. *Education Next*, 9(2), 64–70.**

**Abstract:** The federal law No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires states to “restructure” any school that fails for six years running to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward full proficiency on the part of all students by the year 2014. The law provides a number of restructuring options, including turning over the school's management to a private for-profit or nonprofit entity. Only a few school districts nationwide have sought help from either type of organization in the management of low-performing schools. But in 2002 the School District of Philadelphia, at the request of the state of Pennsylvania, asked entities of both types to participate in a substantial restructuring of many of its lowest-performing schools. The restructuring initiative was directed by the Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC), which contracted with for-profit organizations to manage 30 elementary and middle schools and with nonprofit organizations to manage 16 schools. The policy intervention in Philadelphia raises questions of general interest: Do students at schools assigned to for-profit or nonprofit managers learn more than would be expected had those schools remained under school district management? Is for-profit management more or less effective at raising achievement than nonprofit management? Told most simply, the Philadelphia story provides a threefold answer to these questions: (1) for-profits outperform district-managed schools in math but not in reading; (2) nonprofits probably fall short of district schools in both reading and math instruction; and (3) for-profits outperform nonprofits in both subjects. However, the answers require both explication and qualification. In this article, the authors use a rigorous research design to estimate the impact of for-profit and nonprofit management in Philadelphia.

**Link:** [http://educationnext.org/for-profit-and-nonprofit-management-in-philadelphia-schools/educationnext.org/files/ednext\\_20092\\_64.pdf](http://educationnext.org/for-profit-and-nonprofit-management-in-philadelphia-schools/educationnext.org/files/ednext_20092_64.pdf)

**Pinkus, L.M. (2009). *Action required: Addressing the nation's lowest-performing high schools* (Policy Brief). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.**

**Abstract:** As the national education policy community prepares for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), revamping the school improvement approach leveraged by accountability systems has risen to the top of the agenda. There is an emerging consensus that the school improvement process should be systemic, led by states and districts, based on detailed information about student and school performance, and tailored to meet the individual needs of students and schools. There is also recognition that success is dependent on increased capacity—including skill, knowledge, people, and resources—at the state and district levels to support, manage, and, where necessary, direct these efforts. In this context, the goal of federal policy should be to leverage and support a systemic approach for addressing the problems in the nation's lowest-performing high schools—at scale. This brief examines the current federal approach to addressing the lowest-performing high schools, explores lessons learned from emerging strategies at the state and local levels, and provides related recommendations for federal policy.

**Link:** <http://www.all4ed.org/files/ActionRequired.pdf>

**Princiotta, D., & Reyna, R. (2009). *Achieving graduation for all: A governor's guide to dropout prevention and recovery*. Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices.**

**Abstract:** As governors confront the worst state fiscal environment in the past 25 years, long-term prospects for strong economic growth are hampered by an immense underlying problem: the high school dropout crisis. At least one student in five drops out of school, and nearly 5 million 18 to 24-year-olds lack a high school diploma. Annually, dropouts cost the United States more than \$300 billion in lost wages and increased public-sector expenses. Furthermore, with the nation ranking 20 out of 28 among industrialized democracies on high school graduation rates, the dropout problem is a substantial drag on the nation's economic competitiveness. The high school dropout problem affects all states, but for some, it is more daunting. No state has higher than an 88 percent graduation rate, and 10 states have rates below 66 percent. All states also have “dropout factories,” schools that fail to promote at least 40 percent of 9th graders to 12th grade within three years. More than half the nation's dropouts come from these schools, which are typically located in high-poverty communities. Students drop out of school for four primary



reasons, which are often interrelated. The first is academic failure, which involves failing courses or high school exit exams. The second is disinterest in school—a lack of engagement in academic or social aspects of school—which often leads to poor attendance. The third is problematic behavior inside or outside of school that interferes with learning. Finally, some students drop out because of life events, such as becoming pregnant, getting a job, or caring for an ill family member. These drivers of high school dropout are, of course, strongly influenced by the broader social context of schools, districts, families, communities, and states. Although knowledge of why students drop out exists, states face numerous challenges to action. In many states, outdated laws allow students to drop out before age 18, schools are not held accountable for graduation rates, and responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery is diffuse or nonexistent. Many schools lack the capacity to identify and intervene on behalf of students at risk of dropping out and, once students have dropped out, no clear path back to school exists. Finally, in all states, there are too many low-performing schools and too few effective education options for children and youth. Governors are in an extraordinary position to confront these challenges and stem the tide of high school dropouts. To do so, governors should take four actions: (1) Promote high school graduation for all; (2) Target youth at risk of dropping out; (3) Re-engage youth who have dropped out of school; and (4) Provide rigorous, relevant options for earning a high school diploma. Together, these strategies form a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention and recovery. Governors who pursue these reforms can expect to realize substantial benefits. Lowering dropout rates expands opportunity for more youth, paving the way for success in college, career, and life. It engenders stronger communities, enhanced civic life, and an improved workforce. In the long run, achieving graduation for all helps put states on the path to economic growth.

**Link:** <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0910ACHIEVINGGRADUATION.PDF>

**Quick, H.E., Holtzman, D.J., & Chaney, K.R. (2009). Professional development and instructional practice: Conceptions and evidence of effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 45–71.**

**Abstract:** As with many districtwide reform efforts, the San Diego reform sought to improve classroom instruction by focusing on building the capacity of teachers. This article examines practices of teacher professional development in the district and their impact on literacy instruction. Through examination of the literature on effective professional development, school staff's conceptions of what makes professional development effective, and detailed data on professional development experiences from 100 elementary teachers, we explore the extent to which characteristics of effective professional learning align with what is actually taking place in schools. We also examine relationships between professional development characteristics and teachers' use of instructional practices that have been shown to predict student growth in reading

comprehension. We find that professional development characterized by an emphasis on content and curriculum and that incorporates coaching is related to a higher frequency of this type of instruction. [PDF included]

**Raudenbush, S.W. (2004). *Schooling, statistics, and poverty: Can we measure school improvement?* (William H. Angoff Memorial Lecture Series) Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service; Policy, Evaluation and Research Center.**

**Abstract:** Under No Child Left Behind legislation, schools are held accountable for making “adequate yearly progress.” Presumably, a school progresses when its impact on students improves. Yet questions about impact are causal questions that are rarely framed explicitly in discussions of accountability. One causal question about school impact is of interest to parents: “Will my child learn more in School A or School B?” Such questions are different from questions of interest to district administrators: “Is the instructional program in School A better than that in School B?” Answering these two kinds of questions requires different kinds of evidence. In this paper, I consider these different notions of school impact, the corollary questions about school improvement, and the validity of causal inferences that can be derived from data available to school districts. I compare two competing approaches to measuring school quality and school improvement, the first based on school-mean proficiency, the second based on value added. Analyses of four data sets spanning elementary and high school years show that these two approaches produce pictures of school quality that are, at best, modestly convergent. Measures based on mean proficiency are shown to be scientifically indefensible for high-stakes decisions. In particular, they are biased against high-poverty schools during the elementary and high school years. The value-added approach, while illuminating, suffers inferential problems of its own. I conclude that measures of mean proficiency and value added, while providing potentially useful information to parents and educators, do not reveal direct evidence of the quality of school practice. To understand such quality requires several sources of evidence, with local test results augmented by expert judgment and a coherent national agenda for research and development in education.

**Link:** [http://www.etsliteracy.net/Media/Education\\_Topics/pdf/angoff9.pdf](http://www.etsliteracy.net/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/angoff9.pdf)

**Raudenbush, S.W., Fotiu, R P., & Cheong, Y.F. (1998). *Inequality of access to educational resources: A National Report Card for eighth-grade math. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 20(4), 253–267.***

**Abstract:** This article considers social and ethnic inequality in access to resources for mathematics learning in eighth grade: favorable school disciplinary climate, advanced course

offerings, teacher subject-matter preparation, and emphasis on reasoning during classroom discourse. Data are from 41 states and territories participating in the 1992 Trial State Assessment (TSA) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Socially advantaged students typically had greater access to these resources than did socially disadvantaged students. Access also depended on student ethnicity. However, the degree of social and ethnic inequality in access varied significantly across states. New methods for assessing and displaying state-to-state variation in social and ethnic inequality are illustrated. We argue that “report cards” displaying state differences in student proficiency are, by themselves, misleading; state differences in access to key educational resources provide an important supplement.

**Reed, D.K., & Groth, C. (2009). Academic teams promote cross-curricular applications that improve learning outcomes. *Middle School Journal*, 40(3), 12–19.**

**Abstract:** The middle school team project described in this article was part of a larger district initiative, started in 2001 by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) to create a systemic model of school improvement for increasing student achievement in low-performing schools. Academic teams were established as the conduit for ensuring that the district planning and improvement efforts changed teacher practices. The focus of this article is the middle school team activities that occurred during the 2004–2005 school year, the final year for external facilitation and reform assessment. The authors were involved in two capacities: (a) as the external facilitators leading the cross-curricular academic teams and (b) external evaluators. This study provides further evidence that structured use of cross-curricular academic teams can lead to improved integration of subject matter and to deeper understanding of content and pedagogy related to state standards.

**Reviving America’s schools: Ready, set, go. (2009, Oct. 3). *The Economist*, 392, 33–34.**

**Abstract:** The article focuses on Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education in the administration of President Barack Obama. Duncan is attempting to use some of the funds appropriated to education aid in the 2009 economic stimulus legislation to assist schools in experimenting with educational reforms. Assistance will be targeted towards schools rated as performing poorly.

**Link:** [http://www.economist.com/world/unitedstates/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=14548891](http://www.economist.com/world/unitedstates/displayStory.cfm?story_id=14548891)

**Rivero, V. (2009). Turning around schools in need. *District Administration*, 45(8), 56–61.**

**Abstract:** In December, President-elect Barack Obama selected Chicago's Dodge Renaissance Academy, a 400-student pre-K–8 school, as the backdrop for choosing Arne Duncan, the Chicago Public Schools' CEO, as the nation's new secretary of education. Touted as a "turnaround school," Dodge represented the idea that if change could come to a high-poverty, failing school with low test scores and most students on free or reduced-price lunches, then there was hope for all schools. A school turnaround is a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in student achievement within two academic years. The turnaround model is a careful approach in which either the existing district or an outside partner provides step-by-step strategic oversight and tight operational support. In his speech at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Conference last June, Duncan suggested four basic turnaround models: (1) Students stay and adults leave; (2) Replace the staff and turn the school over to a charter or management organization; (3) Keep the staff but drastically change the school culture; and (4) Everyone goes. Duncan also noted other accomplishments of Chicago schools that had undergone turnarounds: Dodge and Williams Elementary Schools have more than tripled the percentage of students meeting state standards in science, reading, and math in the past five years. This article discusses how the new president and secretary of education bring a new urgency to the task of turning around failing schools nationwide.

**Rockoff, J.E., & Turner, L.J. (2008). *Short run impacts of accountability on school quality* (NBER Working Paper 14564). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.**

**Abstract:** In November of 2007, the New York City Department of Education assigned elementary and middle schools a letter grade (A to F) under a new accountability system. Grades were based on numeric scores derived from student achievement and other school environmental factors such as attendance, and were linked to a system of rewards and consequences. We use the discontinuities in the assignment of grades to estimate the impact of accountability in the short run. Specifically, we examine student achievement in English Language Arts and mathematics (measured in January and March of 2008, respectively) using school level aggregate data. Although schools had only a few months to respond to the release of accountability grades, we find that receipt of a low grade significantly increased student achievement in both subjects, with larger effects in math. We find no evidence that these grades were related to the percentage of students tested, implying that accountability can cause real changes in school quality that increase student achievement over a short time horizon. We also find that parental evaluations of educational quality improved for schools receiving low accountability grades. However, changes in survey response rates hold open the possibility of selection bias in these complementary results.

**Roderick, M., Easton, J.Q., & Sebring, P. B. (2009). *Consortium on Chicago School Research: A new model for the role of research in supporting urban school reform*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.**

**Abstract:** The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago was founded in 1990, two years after the passage of the Chicago School Reform Act that decentralized governance of the city's public schools. Since then, CCSR has distinguished itself as a unique organization, conducting research of high technical quality that is accessible to practitioners and policymakers and that is used broadly by the school reform community. Most importantly, CCSR is viewed as making important contributions to school reform, both through the findings and implications of specific research studies and more broadly by improving the capacity of the district to use data, build effective strategies, and evaluate progress. In this report, we argue that CCSR's focus on building capacity for school reform both sets CCSR's role apart from traditional approaches researchers have used to influence policy and practice and also represents a new model for conducting policy-relevant research. The report begins with a brief background of CCSR. We then describe how a focus on capacity building has been institutionalized in a specific set of organizational arrangements that allow us to establish coherence across studies, seek broad stakeholder engagement, and make findings accessible. We argue further that developing new roles for research is increasingly important in new policy environments that depend significantly on the capacity of teachers and principals to not only respond to incentives and accountability but also to manage decentralized decision making and school improvement efforts.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/CCSR%20Model%20Report-final.pdf>

**Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., & Coca, V. (2009). College readiness for all: The challenge for urban high schools. *Future of Children*, 19(1), 185–210.**

**Abstract:** Melissa Roderick, Jenny Nagaoka, and Vanessa Coca focus on the importance of improving college access and readiness for low-income and minority students in urban high schools. They stress the aspirations-attainment gap: although the college aspirations of all U.S. high school students, regardless of race, ethnicity, and family income, have increased dramatically over the past several decades, significant disparities remain in college readiness and enrollment. The authors emphasize the need for researchers and policymakers to be explicit about precisely which sets of knowledge and skills shape college access and performance and about how best to measure those skills. They identify four essential sets of skills: content knowledge and basic skills; core academic skills; non-cognitive, or behavioral, skills; and “college knowledge,” the ability to effectively search for and apply to college. High schools,

they say, must stress all four. The authors also examine different ways of assessing college readiness. The three most commonly recognized indicators used by colleges, they say, are coursework required for college admission, achievement test scores, and grade point averages. Student performance on all of these indicators of readiness reveals significant racial and ethnic disparities.

To turn college aspirations into college attainment, high schools and teachers need clear indicators of college readiness and clear performance standards for those indicators. These standards, say the authors, must be set at the performance level necessary for high school students to have a high probability of gaining access to four-year colleges. The standards must allow schools and districts to assess where their students currently stand and to measure their progress. The standards must also give clear guidance about what students need to do to improve. College readiness indicators can be developed based on existing data and testing systems. But districts and states will require new data systems that provide information on the college outcomes of their graduates and link their performance during high school with their college outcomes. [PDF included]

**Rothman, R. (2009). Improving student learning requires district learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(1), 44–50.**

**Abstract:** How can districts create systemic improvement—improvement that affects every classroom? A handful of Connecticut districts tried to find out and were supported by the Connecticut Center for School Change to do so. As part of the Systemic Instructional Improvement Program (SIIP), the districts have pursued strategies designed to yield large-scale instructional improvement and to ensure that every aspect of their operations supports schools and students. All of the districts can point to genuine systemic improvements, and most importantly, evidence of substantial student achievement gains. In the process of pursuing this strategy, the districts and the Center have learned a great deal about what it takes to bring about systemic improvement.

**Rouse, C.E., Hannaway, J., Goldhaber, D., & Figlio, D. (2007). *Feeling the Florida heat?: How low-performing schools respond to voucher and accountability pressure* (Working Paper 13). Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER).**

**Abstract:** While numerous recent authors have studied the effects of school accountability systems on student test performance and school “gaming” of accountability incentives, there has been little attention paid to substantive changes in instructional policies and practices resulting



from school accountability. The lack of research is primarily due to the unavailability of appropriate data to carry out such an analysis. This paper brings to bear new evidence from a remarkable five-year survey conducted of a census of public schools in Florida, coupled with detailed administrative data on student performance. We show that schools facing accountability pressure changed their instructional practices in meaningful ways. In addition, we present medium-run evidence of the effects of school accountability on student test scores, and find that a significant portion of these test score gains can likely be attributed to the changes in school policies and practices that we uncover in our surveys.

**Link:** [http://www.caldercenter.org/PDF/1001116\\_Florida\\_Heat.pdf](http://www.caldercenter.org/PDF/1001116_Florida_Heat.pdf)

**Rowan, B. (2002). The ecology of school improvement: Notes on the school improvement industry in the United States. *Journal of Educational Change*, 3(3-4), 283–314. [See also: Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009; Honig, 2009; Marsh et al., 2005; Newmann & Sconzert, 2000; and Sconzert, Smylie, & Wenzel, 2004]**

**Abstract:** This paper explains how organizations other than schools and governing agencies affect the scope and pace of change in American education. In particular, the paper discusses a set of organizations operating in what can be called the school-improvement “industry” in the United States, that is, a group of organizations providing schools and governing agencies with information, training, materials, and programmatic resources relevant to problems of instructional improvement. The paper shows how the structure and functioning of these organizations explain patterns of change in American education, including why schools in the United States experience wave after wave of innovation and reform while at the same time maintaining a stable core of instructional practices.

**Rowan, B., Correnti, R., Miller, R.J., & Camburn, E.M. (2009). *School improvement by design: Lessons from a study of comprehensive school reform programs*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.**

**Abstract:** Presents key findings from CPRE’s research project, *The Study of Instructional Improvement* (SII), a large-scale quasi-experiment that sought to understand the impact of three widely-disseminated comprehensive school reform (CSR) programs on instruction and student achievement in high-poverty elementary schools. The purpose of the study was to track implementation of the CSR programs in elementary schools and to investigate the impact of participation in these programs on teachers, students, and schools. Researchers at the University of Michigan followed schools working with one of three CSR programs—Accelerated Schools Project, America’s Choice, and Success for All. The study also followed a set of closely matched

comparison schools. Although the focus of A Study of Instructional Improvement was on three comprehensive school reform programs, the goal of the study was much greater—to produce some larger insights into a process that the authors call “school improvement by design.” With this in mind, the goal in presenting this study of three comprehensive school reform programs is to provide readers with some key insights into the larger workings of design-based school improvement.

**Link:** [http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre\\_pdfs/sii%20final%20report\\_web%20file.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/sii%20final%20report_web%20file.pdf)

**Rowan, B., & Miller, R.J. (2007). Organizational strategies for promoting instructional change: Implementation dynamics in schools working with comprehensive school reform providers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(2), 252–297.**

**Abstract:** This article develops a conceptual framework for studying how three comprehensive school reform (CSR) programs organized schools for instructional change and how the distinctive strategies they pursued affected implementation outcomes. The conceptual model views the Accelerated Schools Project as using a system of cultural control to produce instructional change, the America’s Choice program as using a model of professional control, and the Success for All program as using a model of procedural control. Predictable differences in patterns of organizing for instructional improvement emerged across schools working with these three programs, and these patterns were found to be systematically related to patterns of program implementation. In particular, the two CSR programs that were organized to produce instructional standardization produced higher levels of instructional change in the schools where they worked. The results of the study suggest organizational strategies program developers can use to obtain implementation fidelity in instructional change initiatives.

**Ryan, M. (2009). *Answering questions about what works in improving low-performing schools and districts* (ECS Research Review). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.**

**Abstract:** This ECS Research Review summarizes six research studies addressing school improvement.

**Link:** <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/83/41/8341.pdf>

**Saunders, W.M., Goldenberg, C N., & Gallimore, R. (2009). Increasing achievement by focusing grade-level teams on improving classroom learning: A prospective, quasi-**

**experimental study of Title I schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(4), 1006–1033.**

**Abstract:** The authors conducted a quasi-experimental investigation of effects on achievement by grade-level teams focused on improving learning. For 2 years (Phase 1), principals-only training was provided. During the final 3 years (Phase 2), school-based training was provided for principals and teacher leaders on stabilizing team settings and using explicit protocols for grade-level meetings. Phase 1 produced no differences in achievement between experimental and comparable schools. During Phase 2, experimental group scores improved at a faster rate than at comparable schools and exhibited greater achievement growth over 3 years on state-mandated tests and an achievement index. Stable school-based settings, distributed leadership, and explicit protocols are key to effective teacher teams. The long-term sustainability of teacher teams depends on coherent and aligned district policies and practices.

**Sconzert, K., Smylie, M.A., & Wenzel, S.A. (2004). *Working for school improvement: Reflections of Chicago Annenberg external partners*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.** [See also: Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009; Honig, 2009; Marsh et al., 2005; Newmann & Sconzert, 2000; and Rowan, 2002]

**Abstract:** In 1995, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge launched a six-year initiative to improve Chicago Public Schools. The Challenge's primary strategy was to group schools with common interests and needs into networks. Each network was paired with an external partner—an individual, group, or organization—to help strengthen school leadership and promote local school improvement. This report draws on the experiences and insights of a sample of Chicago Annenberg external partners. The partners discuss what they learned about the challenges of working with schools, keys to successful school improvement, causes of failure, and the supports needed to work effectively with schools. These perspectives are useful for understanding how those working closely with schools see the task of school improvement and for understanding the role of partners in promoting improvement in the future.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p71.pdf>

**Scott, C. (2009). *Improving low-performing schools: Lessons from five years of studying school restructuring under No Child Left Behind*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.**

**Abstract:** This report synthesizes five years of CEP's research on state and local efforts to improve persistently low-performing schools in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act.

CEP conducted this research in six states—California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, New York, and Ohio—and in 23 districts and 48 schools within those states. The report also makes recommendations for improving federal assistance in this area.

**Link:** <http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=494&parentID=481>

**Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Bryk, A.S. Easton, J.Q., & Luppescu, S. (2006). *The essential supports for school improvement*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research. [See also Bryk et al., 2010]**

**Abstract:** In this report, which draws on data from Chicago public elementary schools in the 1990s, the authors present a framework of essential supports and community resources that facilitate school improvement. The authors provide evidence on how the essential supports contribute to improvements in student learning, and they investigate how community circumstances impact schools' ability to embrace the essential supports. The authors offer empirical evidence on the five essential supports—leadership, parent-community ties, professional capacity, student-centered learning climate, and ambitious instruction—and investigate the extent to which strength in the essential supports was linked to improvements in student learning, and the extent to which weakness was linked to stagnation in learning gains. The authors also find that a school's capacity for improvement is heavily influenced by its community context. Although improving and stagnating schools were found in all different communities, those with particularly strong social capital and low crime rates were likely to have schools with strong essential supports, whereas those with weak social capital were likely to have weak essential supports in their schools. Social capital, in addition to the presence of abuse and neglect among children in the community, impacted the essential supports in complex ways, which the authors describe in detail. Marshalling a wide variety of evidence—CCSR's biannual surveys of CPS; standardized test scores; and data from the Chicago Police Department, the Chapin Hall Center for Children, and the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods—the authors set forth a framework for guiding school improvement efforts and illustrate the barriers that stand in the way of this task.

**Link:** <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/EssentialSupports.pdf>

**Sebring, P.B., & Bryk, A.S. (2000). School leadership and the bottom line in Chicago. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(6), 440–443.**

**Abstract:** A study of Chicago school reform revealed that principals of productive elementary schools skillfully use various strategies to promote parents' and teachers' work with children. These include resolving highly visible problems quickly, focusing on the instructional core, adopting strategic orientation, attacking incoherence, involving parents, and advocating professionalism. [PDF included]

**Slavin, R.E., Cheung, A., Groff, C., & Lake, C. (2008). Effective reading programs for middle and high schools: A best-evidence synthesis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(3), 290–322.**

**Abstract:** This article systematically reviews research on the achievement outcomes of four types of approaches to improving the reading of middle and high school students: (1) reading curricula, (2) mixed-method models (methods that combine large-and small-group instruction with computer activities), (3) computer-assisted instruction, and (4) instructional-process programs (methods that focus on providing teachers with extensive professional development to implement specific instructional methods). Criteria for inclusion in the study were use of randomized or matched control groups, a study duration of at least 12 weeks, and valid achievement measures that were independent of the experimental treatments. A total of 33 studies met these criteria. The review concludes that programs designed to change daily teaching practices have substantially greater research support than those focused on curriculum or technology alone. Positive achievement effects were found for instructional-process programs, especially for those involving cooperative learning, and for mixed-method programs. The effective approaches provided extensive professional development and significantly affected teaching practices. In contrast, no studies of reading curricula met the inclusion criteria, and the effects of supplementary computer-assisted instruction were small. [PDF included]

**Slavin, R.E., & Lake, C. (2008). Effective programs in elementary mathematics: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 427–515.**

**Abstract:** This article reviews research on the achievement outcomes of three types of approaches to improving elementary mathematics: mathematics curricula, computer-assisted instruction (CAI), and instructional process programs. Study inclusion requirements included use of a randomized or matched control group, a study duration of at least 12 weeks, and achievement measures not inherent to the experimental treatment. Eighty-seven studies met these criteria, of which 36 used random assignment to treatments. There was limited evidence supporting differential effects of various mathematics textbooks. Effects of CAI were moderate. The strongest positive effects were found for instructional process approaches such as forms of cooperative learning, classroom management and motivation programs, and supplemental

tutoring programs. The review concludes that programs designed to change daily teaching practices appear to have more promise than those that deal primarily with curriculum or technology alone. [PDF included]

**Slavin, R. E., Lake, C., Chambers, B., Cheung, A., & Davis, S. (2009). Effective reading programs for the elementary grades: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(4), 1391–1466.**

**Abstract:** This article systematically reviews research on the achievement outcomes of four types of approaches to improving the reading success of children in the elementary grades: reading curricula, instructional technology, instructional process programs, and combinations of curricula and instructional process. Study inclusion criteria included use of randomized or matched control groups, a study duration of at least 12 weeks, valid achievement measures independent of the experimental treatments, and a final assessment at the end of Grade 1 or later. A total of 63 beginning reading (starting in Grades K or 1) and 79 upper elementary (Grades 2 through 5) reading studies met these criteria. The review concludes that instructional process programs designed to change daily teaching practices have substantially greater research support than programs that focus on curriculum or technology alone. [PDF included]

**Slavin, R.E., Lake, C., & Groff, C. (2009). Effective programs in middle and high school mathematics: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(2), 839–911.**

**Abstract:** This article reviews research on the achievement outcomes of mathematics programs for middle and high schools. Study inclusion requirements include use of a randomized or matched control group, a study duration of at least 12 weeks, and equality at pretest. There were 100 qualifying studies, 26 of which used random assignment to treatments. Effect sizes were very small for mathematics curricula and for computer-assisted instruction. Positive effects were found for two cooperative learning programs. Outcomes were similar for disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged students and for students of different ethnicities. Consistent with an earlier review of elementary programs, this article concludes that programs that affect daily teaching practices and student interactions have more promise than those emphasizing textbooks or technology alone. [PDF included]

**Smarick, A. (2010). The turnaround fallacy. *Education Next*, 10(1), 20–26.**

**Abstract:** Stop trying to fix failing schools. Close them and start fresh.



**Link:** [http://educationnext.org/files/ednext\\_20101\\_20.pdf](http://educationnext.org/files/ednext_20101_20.pdf)

**Springer, M.G. (2008). The influence of an NCLB accountability plan on the distribution of student test score gains. *Economics of Education Review*, 27(5), 556–563.**

**Abstract:** Previous research on the effect of accountability programs on the distribution of student test score gains is decidedly mixed. This study examines the issue by estimating an educational production function in which test score gains are a function of the incentives schools have to focus instruction on below-proficient students. NCLB's threat of sanctions are positively correlated with test score gains by below-proficient students in failing schools; greater than expected test score gains by below-proficient students do not occur at the expense of high-performing students in failing schools. This pattern of results tends to suggest that failing schools were able to benefit low-performing students in ways that were consistent with having operational slack, and that the threat of sanctions may stimulate greater productivity within failing schools.

**Stecher, B.M., Epstein, S., Hamilton, L.S., Marsh, J.A., Robyn, A., McCombs, J.S., Russell, J., & Naftel, S. (2008). *Pain and gain: Implementing No Child Left Behind in three states, 2004–2006* (MG-784-NSF). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.**

**Abstract:** The Implementing Standards-Based Accountability (ISBA) study was designed to examine the strategies that states, districts, and schools are using to implement standards-based accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and how these strategies are associated with classroom practices and student achievement in mathematics and science. This monograph presents the final results of the ISBA project. It contains descriptive information regarding the implementation of NCLB in California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania from 2003–2004 through 2005–2006. It is a companion to MG-589-NSF, Standards-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind (2007), and updates those findings with an additional year of data, permitting further analyses of state-to-state differences and longer-term trends. This study suggests that school improvement efforts might be more effective if they were responsive to local conditions and customized to address the specific causes of failure and the capacity of the schools in question.

**Link:** [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG784.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG784.pdf)

**Steele, J.L., Murnane, R.J., & Willett, J.B. (2009). *Do financial incentives help low-performing schools attract and keep academically talented teachers? Evidence from California* (NBER Working Paper No. 14780). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.**

**Abstract:** This study capitalizes on a natural experiment that occurred in California between 2000 and 2002. In those years, the state offered a competitively allocated \$20,000 incentive called the Governor's Teaching Fellowship (GTF) aimed at attracting academically talented, novice teachers to low-performing schools and retaining them in those schools for at least four years. Taking advantage of data on the career histories of 27,106 individuals who pursued California teaching licenses between 1998 and 2003, we use an instrumental variables strategy to estimate the unbiased impact of the GTF on the decisions of recipients to begin working in low-performing schools within two years after licensure program enrollment. We estimate that GTF recipients would have been less likely to teach in low-performing schools than observably similar counterparts had the GTF not existed, but that acquiring a GTF increased their probability of doing so by 28 percentage points. Examining retention patterns, we find that 75 percent of both GTF recipients and non-recipients who began working in low-performing schools remained in such schools for at least four years.

**Togneri, W. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools – A leadership brief*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.**

**Abstract:** The Brief is geared to district leaders and policymakers and highlights key findings and recommendations from the complete Beyond Islands of Excellence study.

**Link:** <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/>

**Togneri, W., & Anderson, S.E. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.**

**Abstract:** The report outlines lessons from five high-poverty districts with a record of increasing student achievement. The report identifies a set of practical steps that schools and districts can take to move beyond a few excellent schools to success across entire systems. [*Full report and district case studies available for free download*]

**Link:** <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/>

**Tucci, T.N. (2009). *Whole-school reform: Transforming the nation's low-performing high schools* (Policy Brief). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.**

**Abstract:** The problem is clear: an unacceptable number of America's students are not graduating from high school, and many who do are still not adequately prepared for success in college and career. Past efforts to address this problem have only been able to achieve incremental results. Now, there is increasing recognition that in order to meaningfully solve this problem, efforts should shift from those that are narrow and often yield very slight results to those that can fully transform high schools that are failing to graduate and prepare students. Whole-school reform, a school-improvement approach implemented by schools and districts for almost two decades, can bring about that change through the use of a comprehensive, unified school design that transforms all aspects of a school. As federal policymakers look ahead to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization, they should seek to encourage increased and effective implementation of whole-school reform as part of a systemic approach to school improvement. This brief describes whole-school reform, how it has been supported by federal policy in the past, what lessons have been learned from those policies, and recommendations for how federal policy can encourage and support whole-school reform in more schools facing significant challenges.

**Link:** <http://www.all4ed.org/files/PolicyBriefWholeSchoolReform.pdf>

**Tyler, J.H., & Lofstrom, M. (2009). *Finishing high school: Alternative pathways and dropout recovery. Future of Children, 19*(1), 77–103.**

**Abstract:** John Tyler and Magnus Lofstrom take a close look at the problems posed when students do not complete high school. The authors begin by discussing the ongoing, sometimes heated, debate over how prevalent the dropout problem is. They note that one important reason for discrepancies in reported dropout rates is whether holders of the General Educational Development (GED) credential are counted as high school graduates. The authors also consider the availability of appropriate student data. The overall national dropout rate appears to be between 22 and 25 percent, but the rate is higher among black and Hispanic students, and it has not changed much in recent decades. Tyler and Lofstrom conclude that schools are apparently doing about as well now as they were forty years ago in terms of graduating students. But the increasingly competitive pressures associated with a global economy make education ever more important in determining personal and national well-being. A student's decision to drop out of school, say the authors, is affected by a number of complex factors and is often the culmination of a long process of disengagement from school. That decision, not surprisingly, carries great

cost to both the student and society. Individual costs include lower earnings, higher likelihood of unemployment, and greater likelihood of health problems. Because minority and low-income students are significantly more likely than well-to-do white students to drop out of school, the individual costs fall unevenly across groups. Societal costs include loss of tax revenue, higher spending on public assistance, and higher crime rates. Tyler and Lofstrom go on to survey research on programs designed to reduce the chances of students' dropping out. Although the research base on this question is not strong, they say, close mentoring and monitoring of students appear to be critical components of successful programs. Other dropout-prevention approaches associated with success are family outreach and attention to students' out-of-school problems, as well as curricular reforms. The authors close with a discussion of second-chance programs, including the largest such program, the GED credential. [PDF included]

**U.S. Department of Education (1998). *Turning around low-performing schools: A guide for state and local leaders*. Washington, DC: Author.**

**Abstract:** This guide describes various strategies that states and districts are pursuing to help turn around low-performing schools and raise expectations for all students. Strategies include helping schools gain control of the learning environment, concentrating resources and efforts on providing students with challenging curricula and high-quality instruction, providing services to ensure school readiness, creating a professional development program aligned with curricular content and focused on instructional improvement, and helping schools implement comprehensive school reform programs. It is also important to build underachieving schools' organizational capacity by ensuring strong school leadership, promoting policies that encourage teacher commitment to reform, using resources strategically, helping schools use performance data to drive improvement, involving the community, and providing incentives for change and support for innovation. Initiatives in New York State, Chicago, and San Francisco provide successful examples. President Clinton has also suggested initiatives to improve student achievement, including educational opportunity zones, reduced class size, the America Reads Challenge, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and a school construction initiative to modernize buildings and alleviate overcrowding.

**Link:** <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/turning/index.html>

**U.S. Department of Education (2008). *Evaluation of the Comprehensive School Reform Program implementation and outcomes: Third-year report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.**

**Abstract:** Provides third-year study findings regarding schools receiving Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) assistance awards in 2002, focusing on 1) how CSR award receipt was related to subsequent changes in achievement; 2) whether aspects of program implementation were associated with achievement gains. Findings are based on analyses of survey, case study, and assessment data collected from grantees and comparison schools from fall 2002 through spring 2005. Key findings show: 1) receipt of a CSR award was not associated with gains in mathematics or reading achievement through the first three years of award; 2) there was limited evidence that schools adopting models with scientific evidence of effectiveness experienced positive gains, especially in math.

**Link:** <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/csrd-outcomes/year3-report.pdf>

**U.S. Department of Education (2009).** *An exploratory analysis of Adequate Yearly Progress, identification for improvement, and student achievement in two states and three cities* (Technical Report). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

**Abstract:** This report presents the results of exploratory quasiexperimental analyses that use a Regression Discontinuity (RD) design to examine the relationships between certain features of NCLB accountability and subsequent student achievement in Title I schools in two states and three school districts. Specifically, the report examines the effects of not making AYP or of being identified for the first year of school-improvement status (after missing AYP for two consecutive years). Key findings include: The study found some positive achievement impacts for schools that missed AYP, but not for schools that were identified for the first year of school improvement; effects were not consistent across years and outcomes. Findings from two states and three cities cannot be generalized to produce a national estimate of program effects on student achievement. In addition, the report discusses several study limitations, including technical features of the RD method requiring that the analysis focus on schools that had missed AYP or had been identified for improvement for the first time, which may be relatively weak interventions relative to the full set of progressively more intensive interventions prescribed under Title I.

**Link:** <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/rd-ayp/report.pdf>

**U.S. Department of Education (2010a).** *Achieving dramatic school improvement: An exploratory study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

**Abstract:** Presents findings describing 11 initially low-performing elementary and middle schools receiving support under the federal Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program that were able to make dramatic improvements in academic performance. Intensive case studies were conducted on these schools, some of which made noteworthy student achievement gains in a relatively short (one- to two-year) time frame, while others improved at a slower, steadier pace over a longer period. This exploratory study examined the extent to which the reform processes of the schools reflected characteristics and strategies found in the research, whether schools improving at different rates differed in systematic ways, and the most significant challenges faced in both securing and sustaining dramatic school improvements. Key findings include:

- Nationwide, very few of the initially low-performing CSR schools experienced subsequent dramatic and sustained improvement (i.e., less than five percent).
- The dramatic-improvement schools consistently adopted well-recognized school reform components: leadership, school climate, instructional improvement, and external support.
- However, these schools implemented reform components differently—there was no single ideal approach to significant school improvement as reform strategies were orchestrated and combined in a variety of ways.
- Sustaining school improvement proved as challenging as achieving it in the first place, with some of the visited schools that had made dramatic short-term achievement gains losing ground over time.

**Link:** <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/dramatic-school-improvement/exploratory-study.pdf>

**U.S. Department of Education (2010b). *Evaluation of the Comprehensive School Reform Program implementation and outcomes: Fifth-year report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.**

**Abstract:** Presents overall findings from the evaluation of the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program, including an examination of whether CSR funding had a positive influence on academic achievement. The CSR program was first established as a demonstration program in 1998. It was subsequently authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The program emphasized two major concepts: 1) that school reform should be comprehensive in nature, strengthening all aspects of school operations—curriculum, instruction, professional development, parental involvement, and school organization and, 2) that reform should involve the use of scientifically based research models—that is, models with evidence of effectiveness in multiple settings. The study found that the CSR program did not yield comprehensively reformed schools nor was it



associated with widespread achievement gains. While states largely succeeded in providing CSR funds to schools most in need, these schools implemented only some of the legislatively mandated program components. Achievement gains in CSR schools were largely indistinguishable from comparable non-CSR schools. CSR schools that implemented models with a stronger scientific base had some promising impacts, especially in mathematics. However, only one-third of the schools receiving CSR awards selected such models.

**Link:** <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/csrd-outcomes/year5-report.pdf>

**U.S. Government Accountability Office (2009). *Student achievement: Schools use multiple strategies to help students meet academic standards, especially schools with higher proportions of low-income and minority students* (GAO-10-18). Washington, DC: Author.**

**Abstract:** The federal government has invested billions of dollars to improve student academic performance, and many schools, teachers, and researchers are trying to determine the most effective instructional practices with which to accomplish this. The Conference Report for the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2008 directed GAO to study strategies used to prepare students to meet state academic achievement standards. To do this, GAO answered: (1) What types of instructional practices are schools and teachers most frequently using to help students achieve state academic standards, and do those instructional practices differ by school characteristics? (2) What is known about how standards-based accountability systems have affected instructional practices? (3) What is known about instructional practices that are effective in improving student achievement? GAO analyzed data from a 2006–2007 national survey of principals and 2005–2006 survey of teachers in three states, conducted a literature review of the impact of standards-based accountability systems on instructional practices and of practices that are effective in improving student achievement, and interviewed experts. Nationwide, most principals focused on multiple strategies to help students meet academic standards, such as using student data to inform instruction and increasing professional development for teachers, according to our analysis of data from a U.S. Department of Education survey. Many of these strategies were used more often at high-poverty schools—those where 75 percent or more of the students were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program—and high-minority schools—those where 75 percent or more of students were identified as part of a minority population, than at lower poverty and minority schools. Likewise, math teachers in California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania increased their use of certain instructional practices in response to their state tests, such as focusing more on topics emphasized on assessments and searching for more effective teaching methods, and teachers at high-poverty and high-minority schools were more likely than teachers at lower-poverty schools and lower-minority schools to have made these changes, according to GAO’s analysis of survey data collected by the RAND Corporation.

Some researchers suggested that differences exist in the use of these practices because schools with lower poverty or lower minority student populations might generally be meeting accountability requirements and therefore would need to try these strategies less frequently. Research shows that standards-based accountability systems can influence instructional practices in both positive and negative ways. For example, some research notes that using a standards-based curriculum that is aligned with corresponding instructional guidelines can facilitate the development of higher order thinking skills in students. But, in some cases, teacher practices did not always reflect the principles of standards-based instruction, and the difficulties in aligning practice with standards were attributed, in part, to current accountability requirements. Other research noted that assessments can be powerful tools for improving the learning process and evaluating student achievement, but assessments can also have some unintended negative consequences on instruction, including narrowing the curriculum to only material that is tested. Many experts stated that methodological issues constrain knowing more definitively the specific instructional practices that improve student learning and achievement. Nevertheless, some studies and experts pointed to instructional practices that are considered to be effective in raising student achievement, such as differentiated instruction. Professional development for teachers was also highlighted as important for giving teachers the skills and knowledge necessary to implement effective teaching practices.

**Link:** <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1018.pdf>

**Viadero, D. (2009, Aug. 12). Research doesn't offer much guidance on turnarounds. *Education Week*, 28, 10.**

**Abstract:** The article discusses the lack of research-based strategies for school turnarounds in the context of major federal funding for turnarounds by the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top Fund. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) differentiates school-improvement programs, which are gradual, from turnarounds, which emphasize quick results from strong leadership. The Institute has launched three research programs to identify promising practices. [*PDF included*]

**Walberg, H.J. (Ed.) (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement*. Charlotte, NC: The Academic Development Institute and Information Age Publishing, Inc.**

**Abstract:** As suggested by the title, the purpose of this *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* is to provide principles for restructuring and substantially improving schools. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the Center on Innovation &

Improvement (CII) engaged leading experts on restructuring and school improvement to prepare modules for this handbook to assist states, districts, and schools in establishing policies, procedures, and support to successfully restructure schools. The *Handbook* is organized into three sections. The topic of the *Handbook's* modules— restructuring with a focus on the district as the impetus for dramatic improvement —is relatively new in the nation's education history. For this reason, the module authors were selected because they are highly experienced experts in their fields and can be counted on to judiciously weigh the less than definitive evidence and to state useful guiding principles.

**Contents:** Preface / Herbert J. Walberg, Editor -- Section 1: Overview of Restructuring -- Overview of Restructuring / Bryan Hassel, Emily Hassel, and Lauren Morando Rhim -- Section 2: Topical Modules -- District-Wide Framework for Improvement / Kenneth K. Wong -- The School Board and Central Office in District Improvement / Gordon Cawelti and Nancy Protheroe -- Restructuring Options and Change Processes / Carole L. Perlman -- Restructuring Through Learning-Focused Leadership / Joseph Murphy -- Changing and Monitoring Instruction / Herbert J. Walberg -- Systems for Improved Teaching and Learning / Sam Redding -- Section 3: Indicators of Successful Restructuring -- Indicators of Successful Restructuring / Sam Redding.

**Link (Center on Innovation & Improvement PDF version):**

<http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Restructuring%20Handbook.pdf>

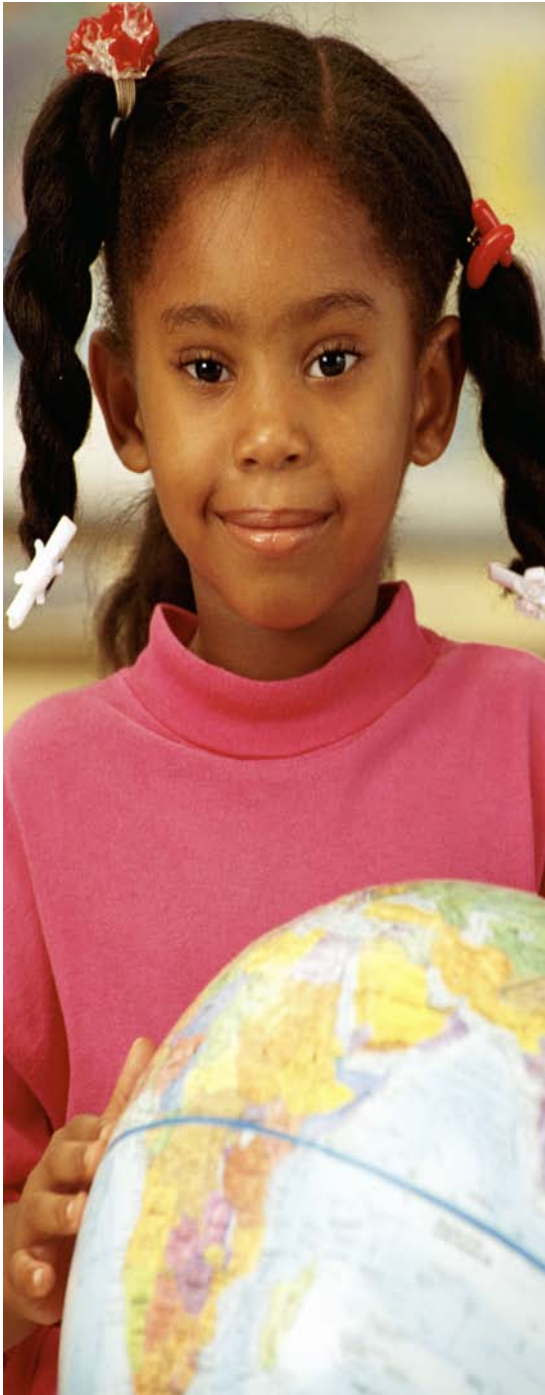
**Wallace Foundation (2009).** *Research findings to support effective educational policymaking: Evidence & action steps for state, district & local policymakers.* New York: Author.

**Abstract:** After a decade of work with states, districts, city governments, and community organizations around the country to expand learning and enrichment opportunities both in and out of school, The Wallace Foundation has accumulated a body of knowledge and field-based lessons that are highly relevant for developing comprehensive approaches to achieving the Race to the Top reform objectives and other federal strategies to improve public education. As recently described in the Federal Register, those submitting plans and grant applications to address those objectives will be asked to demonstrate a high degree of policy and strategy coordination at all levels of public education. This brief report highlights a number of research findings and action steps drawn from policies and practices that have been shown to be critical to the success of educational reforms at the local, district and state levels. The report focuses on the following topics:

- A letter from Wallace president M. Christine DeVita
- Coordinating state, city, and district policies
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools—the role of district leaders
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools—the role of the principal
- Preparing and developing effective school leaders
- Expanding opportunities for out-of-school learning

**Link:**

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/Research-Findings-Action-Items-to-Support-Effective-Educational-Policymaking.pdf>



**We provide research based information on educational initiatives happening nationally and regionally. The EBE Request Desk is currently taking requests for:**

- Research on a particular topic
- Information on the evidence base for curriculum interventions or professional development programs
- Information on large, sponsored research projects
- Information on southeastern state policies and programs

**For more information or to make a request, contact:**

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